

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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**Transformative Christian Leadership**

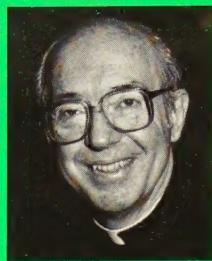


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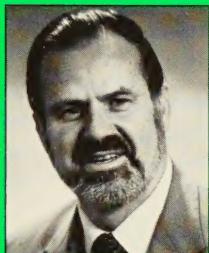
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Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide names of author(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Illustrations, if any, should be submitted as high-quality, glossy, unmounted black and white photographic prints. Do not send original artwork.

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# EDITOR'S PAGE

## UNEMPLOYED BUT POSSIBLY FORTUNATE

**H**ardly a day goes by without our hearing the news that some large corporation has decided to terminate the employment of hundreds or thousands of its employees. All over the country smaller companies, too, are cutting their operating costs by firing employees who are not absolutely essential. Many workers are joining the ranks of the unemployed by accepting the package of benefits that comes with early retirement. Even some men and women religious are among the multitude experiencing the shock and distress that follow the unanticipated announcement that one's services are no longer required. Steadily, the unemployed segment of the country's population keeps getting larger, and no one can say how long the trend will continue, or when the outgoing tide affecting millions of families and communities might be reversed.

For many Americans, unemployment is catastrophic. Unlike those who reach retirement age after preparing themselves psychologically and financially for unemployment, people who are fired from their jobs prematurely often plummet into a hellish affective state that painfully blends anger, resentment, fear, and depression. When their frustration over not being able to find a new job goes on for months or sometimes years, many find their physical as well as their mental health becoming increasingly impaired. Their emotional stress, when prolonged, brings on such afflictions as headaches, ulcers, high blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks, and even some forms of cancer, according to researchers.

Guilt feelings frequently deepen the distress of out-of-work persons who have been family breadwinners, and a sense of shame plagues those who believe that others are blaming them for not going to work every day and paying their bills on time. Unemployed people who take advantage of some of their time off by skiing or playing golf sometimes find themselves criticized mercilessly for not spending it in constant pursuit of new work. The individuals doing the faultfinding are usually folks who have never themselves experienced the deep discouragement that comes from seeking a job unsuccessfully—from hearing “sorry, there's no work for you here” over and over again.

Families and communities affected by the attitudes and feelings of their unemployed members can be brought to a state of crisis in a relatively short period of time. Discouragement, pessimism, and cynicism, when widespread, can easily project a whole city or town into a mood of depression. Alcoholism and suicides are found to increase under such conditions; when job-sustained self-esteem is lost, many, feeling depressed, act self-destructively, as if life itself is not even worth preserving.

But the millions of people who are currently unemployed may not be totally disadvantaged. The time on their hands, unwelcome as it usually is, can be converted into an opportunity for personal growth and development. It affords a good chance to examine one's life and present situation from a spiritual point of view. As Ignatius of Loyola has taught us, wealth may at times be less a blessing than poverty, and health less salutary than sickness. So too, in God's providence, unemployment can be a better blessing than having work to do. If, for example, jobless people spend at least part of their time assessing their lives, their skills, and their relationships (including their relationship

with God), they can generally find ways to enrich these, with benefits that can improve the rest of their lives. However, most people need help to accomplish such reappraisal and renewal, so this is a season when sensitive persons within a local church, counseling center, retreat house, or educational institution have expanding opportunities to provide the help that is needed if potential catastrophe is to be turned into gain.

The unemployed can be guided to know, love, and trust God better; they can be taught to appreciate and enjoy more deeply the available treasury of literature, music, science, and history; they can be counseled regarding the principles and skills related to keeping life stresses at a healthy minimum; they can be shown that their worth as persons does not have to depend on having a job and bringing home a salary; they can be assisted in getting their bodies into optimal physical shape through exercise and balanced nutrition; they can, in short, be helped to use their God-given gift of

time in spiritual, intellectual, social, and cultural pursuits that can foster personal development they might otherwise never experience.

It is time for all of us who have spiritual, material, social, educational, recreational, psychological, and medical resources that can be shared with the unemployed to reach out to them now and to continue responding during the difficult months, and perhaps years, ahead. It is a good time to keep in mind what the Lord has made challengingly clear: "Inasmuch as you have done this for the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you have done it personally for me" (Matt. 25:40-45).



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.  
Editor-in-Chief

## New Guidelines for Nutrition

**S**ince 1980 the federal departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services have been publishing dietary guidelines. Their aim is to offer nutrition recommendations phrased in easy-to-read language. The 1990 guidelines, as described by Dr. Alden Neskeim, chairman of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, for the first time attempt to offer a formula for more healthful overall eating. "Instead of telling people what not to do, we've tried to be a little more positive," he says.

Among the changes in the 1990 guidelines is a complete revision of the 1985 table of desirable weights for men and women. No longer is the advisory committee basing its recommendations on the 1959 table developed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. The new weight chart categorizes men and women together and indicates "healthy weight" rather than "desirable weight," transferring the emphasis from appearance to health. Recent research has found that "as people grow older, they can weigh a little more without jeopardizing their health," according to dietitian Denise Webb in the *New York Times*.

Committee member Dr. Wayne Callaway of George

Washington University adds, "The research in the last 20 years shows that you can't just look at weight alone; you have to look at the distribution of the weight." Researchers have found that people who tend to accumulate fat on the upper body are at greater risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease than those whose fat deposits are greatest around the hips and thighs.

The new guidelines suggest that dieters lose weight more slowly than previously recommended. They explain that reducing weight by more than one half to one pound a week is inadvisable, since reducing calories enough to maintain a faster loss is likely to result in inadequate nutrition. Formerly, a weight loss of one to two pounds a week was recommended as safe. According to Dr. Callaway, studies have shown that "people who lose weight quickly do not keep it off." Very-low-calorie diets often fail to promote changes in the dieter's long-term eating habits.

Free copies of the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" are available from the Consumer Information Center, Department 514-X, Pueblo, Colorado 81009. No return postage is needed.

# SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

REVEREND MARGARET BULLITT-JONAS, PH.D.

**S**piritual direction respects the unique character, situation, and needs of each person. Every one of us travels his or her own particular and unique journey home to God, and good spiritual direction willingly embraces the fact that "the wind blows where it will." Because the Holy Spirit works freely in every person, the spiritual director must be open to the unexpected, sensitive to surprise, and ready to relinquish any preconceived notions about how a person might fit into this or that category, this or that model of spiritual development. At the same time, it has been my experience that the process of spiritual direction is strengthened and enriched if the director has a basic understanding of the emotional effects of growing up in a family troubled by such dysfunctions as alcoholism, addiction, and physical or sexual abuse. Although each person is unique, adults who are recovering from the pain and damage caused by growing up in a dysfunctional family do tend to share characteristic emotional problems that can affect their capacity and their inclination to pray, their images of God, and their relationship to the divine. I am convinced that the more clearly a spiritual director understands the emotional difficulties that tend to plague those who grew up in dysfunctional families, the

more discerning and effective the director can be in guiding such persons toward spiritual growth and wholeness.

In recent years, mental health professionals have begun to focus on the unique constellation of emotional problems that characterize adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs)—persons who grew up in a family in which one or both of the parents were alcoholic. In *The Addictive Organization*, Anne Wilson Schaef and Diane Fassel define an alcoholic family in more general terms, as a family "that repeats alcoholic or addictive patterns." It has been estimated that in the United States, as many as 28 to 34 million people, or 15 percent of the population, are ACOAs, though Schaef and Fassel believe that even this estimate is too low. What's more, persons who did not grow up with an alcoholic parent but whose grandparent, spouse, or love partner is chemically addicted suffer from many of the same dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behavior that characterize ACOAs. These so-called co-dependents represent an even larger percentage of the American population. Obviously, the problem of growing up with or living in a close relationship with an addicted person is one that permeates our society. Many of those seeking spir-

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## **The spiritual director should be alert to the possibility that the ACOA's attraction to contemplative prayer is premature**

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itual direction today are struggling to recover from the spiritual damage that addiction inflicts on the human psyche and spirit.

My own interest in discovering what hinders or helps an ACOA to grow spiritually comes not only from the ACOAs to whom I've offered spiritual direction but also from my own personal experience of growing up with an alcoholic parent. Both as director and directee, I have come to respect the power of the emotional patterns that haunt ACOAs and block their relationship to God. For example, ACOAs may be obsessed with control and the fear of being out of control. ACOAs usually find it difficult to trust either themselves or other people, and tend to avoid experiencing or expressing their feelings. ACOAs also tend to ignore their own personal needs, to fear criticism and conflict, and to dread abandonment. The list goes on. In different ways, each of these patterns can distort or dry up one's prayer life and one's sense of the presence of God.

### **APPROACHES TO PRAYER**

Having grown up in an alcoholic home, I have come to appreciate the importance of finding a spiritual director who understands the emotional dynamics of the ACOA. In addition, like other ACOAs, I have found that it is crucial to my own ministry of spiritual direction that I continue to work on my own personal recovery. We ACOAs must keep our eyes open, for the very role of spiritual director can in itself trigger such familiar co-dependent patterns of behavior as trying to "save" the other person, trying to be perfect, avoiding conflict, trying to maintain an idealized self-image, and so on.

Given the particular emotional and spiritual difficulties that tend to trouble ACOAs, how can spiritual directors facilitate their spiritual growth and enable them to develop a vital, lively relationship with God? The following suggestions and reflections—based on my own experience, as an ACOA, of both giving and receiving spiritual direction—focus especially on two aspects of the spiritual life: attitudes toward prayer and forms of prayer.

Prayer is a process of making ourselves available to God, of sharing ourselves as candidly and openly as we can with the One whose love sustains and embraces us from moment to moment throughout our lives. In prayer we seek to throw off the disguises and drop the poses with which we ordinarily protect ourselves, and to express to God what lies most deeply in our hearts. True prayer requires the twin gifts of courage and humility, for it is no easy thing to invite the Holy Spirit into our depths. All prayer ultimately involves our willingness to reveal ourselves, just as we are, to the eyes of God, and all prayer therefore involves risk.

Not surprisingly, then, every one of us, ACOA or not, has times of coming to prayer with some trepidation. Among other things, we bring with us our shame and guilt and failings, our sense that we have fallen short or missed the mark, and possibly our fear that in prayer we will discover aspects of ourselves that we won't much like or of which we are afraid. This natural human reticence to pray may be exacerbated in the ACOA, who carries such a load of shame and repressed feelings that it may be threatening indeed to begin to expose them to the judgment and mercy of God. Simply settling down to pray may be difficult for the ACOA, who, for example, may be unduly absorbed in caring for other people and may routinely avoid attending to his or her own needs ("Am I not being selfish if I take prayer time for myself?"). Some ACOAs may avoid praying because of their fear of losing control or of being overwhelmed by feelings; others may come face to face in prayer with their fear of abandonment and may hesitate to keep praying (as one woman anxiously whispered to me, "What if I pray and there's no one there?").

The first task of the spiritual director may simply be to encourage the ACOA to persist in prayer and to explore with the ACOA what blocks him or her from taking time to pray. The director's second task may then be to help the ACOA to discover what particular forms of prayer help him or her to listen more attentively and to open himself or herself more completely to the presence of God.

The ACOAs whom I've met in spiritual direction have tended to have practiced, and to feel comfortable with, one of two forms of prayer: either positive affirmations or imageless prayer. Each of these forms of prayer has its strengths and its weaknesses in helping the soul to be drawn to God. The spiritual director needs to be sensitive in discerning,

and in assisting the directee to discern, why a particular kind of prayer may be appealing to the directee at a given point in his or her recovery.

Positive affirmations include the repetition of the Serenity Prayer or the reading of Rokelle Lerner's *Daily Affirmations for Adult Children of Alcoholics* or *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon*. These and similar affirmations and meditations can play an invaluable part in the prayer life of the ACOA. They offer hope, they may begin to rebuild a person's damaged self-esteem, and they provide useful reminders about the importance of letting go, attending to one's own needs as well as those of others, accepting one's imperfections, and meeting life's challenges optimistically. I frequently recommend the two Lerner books to ACOAs who are unfamiliar with them. At the same time, I stress that these positive affirmations need to be used wisely and with discernment, for they can be used not to face but rather to avoid and to conceal the darker aspects of the self. For instance, to cling too tightly to the phrase "Right now my life is changing for the better" may interfere with one's frankly admitting to oneself and to God the depth of one's despair and hopelessness. Repeating a phrase like "God is always with me" may obscure one's honest sense that God is in fact absent.

When working with a directee who finds positive affirmations a helpful part of prayer, the spiritual director may want to complement the affirmations by emphasizing that God welcomes hearing our despair as well as our helpfulness, our sorrow as well as our joy, our rage as well as our patience. To the ACOA in the initial stages of recovery, this idea will no doubt sound fanciful or incredible. Before ACOAs can entrust their darker selves to God, they may well need first to learn to trust their spiritual directors with some of the feelings, memories, or ideas that the ACOAs find shameful or repellent. If spiritual directors maintain a nonanxious, non-judgmental, and accepting presence with these directees, then the ACOAs will be enabled to share more fully with God the truth of who they really are, warts and all. I have the impression that the more freely and openly an ACOA comes to trust God with his or her "negative" qualities and feelings, the more the need for using positive affirmations will drop away.

Many ACOAs are attracted to engaging in imageless prayer that concentrates the mind and suspends thought—for example, practicing the Jesus Prayer or Centering Prayer, or using such Eastern methods as repeating a mantra or becoming mindful of one's breath. Some are similarly drawn to the apophatic tradition of experiencing God in "unknowing" and in "darkness." This approach to prayer has a long and distinguished history in Christian spirituality and was practiced by such masters as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Meister Eckhart, Bernard of Clairvaux,

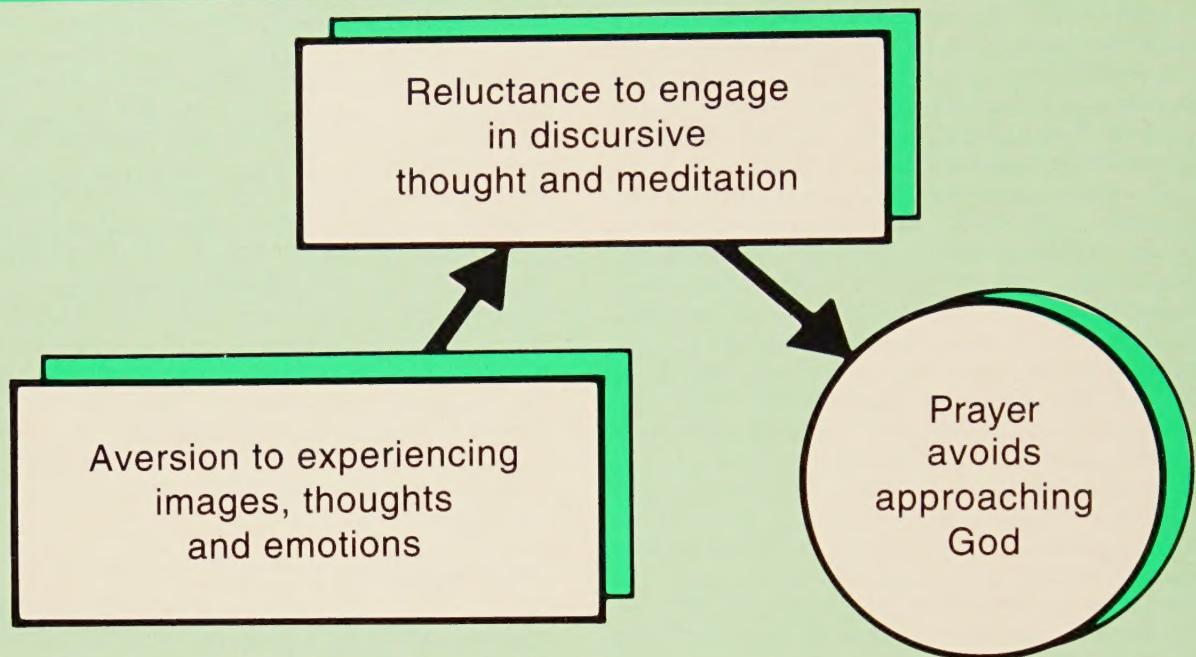
John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Merton. For example, in "The Inner Experience: Infused Contemplation (V)" (*Cistercian Studies*, 1984), Merton declares that "contemplation is pure in proportion as it is free from sensible and conceptual elements. . . . The higher and more perfect contemplation goes beyond sense imagery and discursive understanding, and flashes out in the darkness of 'unknowing.'" He is scathing in his assessment of liturgies and spiritual exercises that "rob" the contemplative of "the emptiness, darkness, and purposelessness in which God speaks with such overwhelming effect!" John of the Cross is similarly devastating in *Living Flame of Love* when he likens the spiritual director who does not understand the stages of prayer beyond discursive meditation to "a blacksmith, [who] knows no more than how to hammer and pound with the faculties." Again, the *Life of Teresa of Avila* describes her pain when for some twenty years she was unable to find a spiritual director who understood that she had reached the higher stages of prayer.

## READINESS FOR CONTEMPLATION

At the risk of joining the unfortunate ranks of spiritual directors who did not recognize or affirm their directees' genuine call to contemplation, I must assert that the spiritual director should be alert to the possibility that the ACOA's attraction to contemplative prayer is premature. While it may be that the Holy Spirit is drawing the person to apophatic or contemplative prayer, it is also possible that the directee's own aversion to exploring and experiencing certain emotions, thoughts, and images is making him or her reluctant to engage in discursive thought and meditation. I believe that if the latter is the case, the directee is unwittingly using contemplative prayer as a way of avoiding rather than approaching God.

It is worth remembering that even the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* warns of the danger and futility of a premature desire to enter into contemplation. In discerning with an ACOA directee about whether or not the directee is in fact being called by God to contemplative prayer, the spiritual director might find it helpful to explore such questions as these: How experienced is the directee in expressive forms of prayer such as penitence, petition, thanksgiving, adoration, or praise? How much time does the directee devote to prayer? Is there a sense in director or directee that prayer is being used as a way of avoiding a full engagement with life? Is the directee free to share with God the full range of human emotion, or are there particular emotions from which the directee will flee at almost any cost? Under what circumstances does the directee feel called to pray? Does the directee feel drawn to imageless prayer when uncomfortable emotions or situations arise in his or her life?

# Premature Attraction to Contemplation



To what extent does the directee know and accept the "messy" parts of himself or herself? Does the directee tend to judge himself or herself unmercifully? Is the directee attached to a self-image of being "spiritual," "saintly," or "a contemplative"? Would the directee feel embarrassed or ashamed if God were not at this point calling him or her to the higher stages of prayer? What are the fruits of the person's contemplative prayer—for instance, does he or she live a life increasingly free of either self-centeredness or self-abnegation?

In sorting out these questions with the directee, the director should be sensitive to the person's body language. Does the directee maintain eye contact? Does he or she seem comfortable in his or her body? The director should also observe the directee's tone of voice and quality of emotional feeling. Many of the ACOAs I've met who are attracted to apophatic prayer present themselves as controlled, earnest, "nice," sometimes rather isolated individuals who don't seem quite grounded in their bodies or at ease with the messiness of anger, desire, or grief. Apophatic prayer can seem immensely appealing to persons sincerely seeking God who are at the same time burdened with shame, self-hate, and a fear of expressing feelings. It can be tempting to use the silence of imageless prayer as a way of skipping over whatever is uncomfortable in one's

life or in one's heart. And practicing imageless prayer, especially for long periods of time at a stretch, can bolster one's idealized self-image of being a spiritual person.

I myself was drawn to contemplative prayer for some of these reasons, and I remember my initial anger and shame (and eventual gratitude) when my clinical pastoral education supervisor, Claire McGowan, O.P., confronted me about my using such prayer as a way to avoid the pain and the passion of being alive. In the years since that encounter, which marked a turning point in my spiritual life, I have come to appreciate the wisdom of such spiritual seekers as Richard of St. Victor, a twelfth-century theologian who warned about "[the one who] raises the eye of the heart in vain to see God when [one] is not fully prepared to see [oneself]. Let a person first learn to know [one's] own concealed reality before [one] considers [oneself] capable of grasping invisible things. You must know the invisible things of your own spirit before you can be capable of knowing the invisible things of God."

## IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ENCOUNTER

I would not claim that one must know oneself fully before one can seek to know God, if for no

other reason than that self-knowledge is always incomplete and that to wait for the perfection of self-knowledge before beginning the spiritual journey would thus be to delay the journey forever. Still, to embark on the search for God while dismissing or avoiding self-knowledge is equally unproductive, for God is the foundation on which our very being rests. To resist self-knowledge is to resist the God who speaks to us in and through all things. We cannot encounter God if we are unwilling to encounter ourselves.

How, then, might a spiritual director help the ACOA to encounter God and self? For the ACOA struck numb with what Schaeff and Fassel call frozen feelings, the spiritual director might encourage exploring affective prayer. Praying the psalms can help isolated and emotionally frozen ACOAs to connect not only with the person who wrote the psalms but also with the generations of the faithful who have used the psalms in private and corporate prayer, and the God who welcomes and listens to the whole range of human feelings. For the ACOA who comes to spiritual direction confused, obsessively talkative, and anxious to "figure everything out," the spiritual director might break in with humor (nothing seems to cut through obsessive thinking so quickly as shared laughter); with an invitation to some moments of silence or of attention to bodily sensations or the breath (a person overly busy in thought tends to lose contact with the body); or with a simple question, such as "What are you feeling right now?" Encouraging the ACOA to stay in the here and now, in the present encounter with the spiritual director, may help the directee to become present to himself or herself and to God.

For the ACOA who seems oblivious to or cut off from the body, the spiritual director might discuss the value of intentionally including the body in one's prayer, and show the directee some simple bodily postures or gestures that can deepen one's experience of prayer. The director might also discuss how expressive the body can be in communicating with God; the emotionally inhibited ACOA may be astonished to learn that prayer can take place while one kneels on all fours and sobs, or while one pounds a pillow in anger.

Again, many ACOAs are secretly convinced that as human beings, as selves, they are worthless, and they may try to make a virtue out of necessity by believing that the height of spiritual maturity is to have no self at all. With these persons the spiritual director might want to discuss the Christian mystical tradition, which affirms that in the ultimate, transforming union with God, the individual self is cherished rather than obliterated or discarded. The spiritual director might also encourage the ACOA to begin to seek a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, however charismatic or evangelical (and therefore, in some circles, however ludicrous) that

To wait for the perfection of self-knowledge before beginning the spiritual journey would be to delay the journey forever

might sound. In daring to accept a personal relationship with Christ, the individual may be overwhelmed by the discovery that indeed Christ does value him or her as a person.

Finally, many ACOAs constantly focus their attention outside themselves and devote their lives to efforts to please other people or to please God. They may come to spiritual direction anxiously absorbed in trying to discern "the will of God" and to carry out the will of this alien Other, who is somewhere "out there." The spiritual director might speak to these persons of a God who is intimate and immanent, as well as transcendent, and encourage them, as part of the process of discernment, to explore their own inner truth and their own heart's desire. What a revelation it may be to the ACOA to learn—in the words of Charles Healey, S.J., writing about Thomas Merton's approach to spiritual direction—that "often the real and genuine aspirations of the heart are important indicators of the will of God, and a humble and sincere desire may be a sign that God is asking this of us."

The ACOA who comes to a spiritual director for guidance in the life of prayer is a person who has been hurt, a person who has probably been forced to suppress or to split off parts of himself or herself in order to cope with growing up in a dysfunctional family. The task of the spiritual director is to help such a person to bring his or her whole self to God so that at last the suppressed and scattered parts of the self can be integrated and the person freed to love God with all his or her heart and soul and mind and strength.

Perhaps it is worth noting, in conclusion, that in helping the ACOA to be freed of the addictive patterns in which he or she has been caught, the spiritual director engages in an act of cultural resistance. Our society is one that needs addictions. As Schaef and Fassel point out, our society

fosters addictions because the best-adjusted person in the society is the person who is not dead and not alive, just numb, a zombie. When you are dead you are not able to do the work of the society. When you are fully alive, you are constantly saying no to many of the processes of the society: the racism, the polluted environment, the nuclear threat, the arms race, drinking unsafe water, and eating carcinogenic foods. Thus, it is in the interests of the society to promote those things that "take the edge off," get us busy with our "fixes," and keep us slightly "numbed out" and zombielike.

To the extent that it is in the interests of society that we remain zombies, then in supporting and challenging a person to awaken, to see clearly, to feel deeply, to act decisively, and in all things to listen attentively to the will of God, today's spiritual director has in effect become a social revolutionary.

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## Depression Affects More Women than Men

**A** three-year study by researchers commissioned by the American Psychological Association (APA) has discovered that women are twice as likely as men to experience depression. The study found that at least seven million American women suffer from depression and that most will go untreated. Frequently, the consequences, such as suicide, are tragic. Ellen McGrath, chairwoman of the National Task Force on Women and Depression, interpreted the study as showing that "women truly are more depressed than men, primarily due to their experience of being female in our contemporary culture."

The task force's report stated that a combination of social, economic, biological, and emotional factors raise the risk of depression for women. Among the task force's findings:

- Abuse in early life may play a large role. Between 37 percent and half of all women have had "a significant experience of physical or sexual abuse before the age of 21."
- Depression in women may be linked to gender-related personality styles that include passive, dependent behavior patterns and negative thinking. More research is required in this area.
- Biology is not as strong an influence in women's depression as previously believed. Menstruation,

pregnancy, abortion, and menopause are not major factors in significant depression for most women. Infertility, on the other hand, is a major factor; 40 percent of the women studied said that the inability to conceive is "the most upsetting experience of their lives."

- Poverty is "a pathway to depression." Seventy-five percent of the American poor are women and children.
- Women are three times more likely than men to be depressed in unhappy marriages. The presence of young children creates a vulnerability to depression. The more children in the house, the more depression is reported.
- The groups of women particularly susceptible to depression include minority, elderly, chemically dependent, lesbian, and professional women. The report said these women "need special attention and support."

Chairwoman McGrath said the task force "found that women of all races, ages, and income levels—in Europe, Africa and North America—are all at higher risk than men for most types of depression." Depression, the report states, "now readily yields to treatment in 80 to 90 percent of all patients." However, it adds, "most women with the ailment go untreated."

# Parish Staff Collaboration

William Burkert, S.T., M.A., and Paul Michalenko, S.T., M.A.

**T**he challenge of collaboration is being experienced in many aspects of church ministry. While the term *collaboration* may be for some an interesting “in-word” and concept to be studied, for others it is a life-style necessary to adopt. Bishops are attempting to collaborate with each other and their clergy. Diocesan offices are coming together to communicate, to share diminishing resources, and to avoid duplication. Clusters of parishes meet to share resources and develop a common approach for an area of a city. Religious communities are opening themselves to lay groups so that they might share their charism. Parish staffs are meeting regularly to collaborate on the mission of the church and the pastoral plan of the parish. Clergy, laity, and religious together are forming councils of all sorts in order to formulate new responses to complex issues.

Our experience of working with these different church groups leads us to believe that the participation of parish staff is the toughest and most consistent test of the developing reality of collaboration. At the level of the parish staff, the collaborative pace and model is set and reflected to the rest of the parish and the church. Here the significant questions about collaboration are concrete:

- Are members' gifts identified, developed, and released for service?

- Is a spirit of trust, acceptance, and respect for each other's role, vocation, and gender developed?
- Is the developed community effective for the practice of ministry and appropriate for human dignity?
- Do staff members know why they are together, what is expected, and where they hope to go?
- Do staff members work through blocks, conflicts, and uncomfortable feelings for greater growth?

These questions and the issues they reflect are key to collaborative growth. Failure to deal with them will result in failure.

When a staff initially comes together, the skills, practices, and attitudes needed to effectively collaborate and engage these issues are absent from the training and formation. While the business world may invest millions of dollars to retrain and retool their executives for team building, in the church individuals are left to initiate whatever training and help they need.

Individual readiness and ability to collaborate are central factors. Many publications have addressed the psychological, emotional, and developmental issues that enable or hurt the collaboration model. We will look at readiness in another area, that of addressing and negotiating the primary issues of a staff in setting its collaborative course. What

follows is an exploration of three essential group issues and how they can be negotiated to further the collaborative endeavor in a parish staff setting.

## STAFF NEEDS PURPOSE

Experience has shown that a collection of competent individuals a collaborative staff does not make. There must be a force that unites all in a common cause. If such a force is not present, the individuals will turn to "turfism"—competing for resources and withholding information for power. The force that is needed to unite is a worthwhile purpose that inflames enthusiasm and channels the group's energy as a whole. A group without such a purpose is doomed to frustrating failure.

The development of such a purpose is a result of the staff members' corporate reflection, discussion, and consensus, which are based on the needs of the parish community they serve. The statement of purpose must be clearly articulated and shared by all members and must represent a direction that can actually be accomplished. Once formed and articulated, the purpose directs the staff in terms of why they have come together.

The members of the parish staff fill wide-ranging leadership roles throughout the parish. When they gather to address their purpose, they look to tasks that will accomplish that common cause. The tasks follow the purpose and are the means by which the staff will accomplish it. For example, a parish staff has gathered in a collaborative manner to accomplish the following stated purpose: "We are to facilitate the spiritual growth of St. Anne's Parish Community." Some of the tasks implied in this purpose are as follows:

- understand what each staff member means by "spiritual growth";
- assess the current state of parish spirituality, both positive and negative;
- plan a concrete response in various ministerial areas, such as liturgy, education, social life, outreach, and physical resources;
- implement the plan with specifics; and
- evaluate what has and has not been accomplished.

## ARTICULATED EXPECTATIONS

In accomplishing the purpose and the tasks, it is important that the staff members have clear expectations of one another. The process called for is forming a contract. Many of the obstacles that block effective mutual or collaborative ministry arise because the rules are not spelled out and agreed on by the entire group. Issues such as the primacy of staff meetings, time frame, participation expectations, decision-making models, and meeting format are often forgotten, even though

they are important. Failure to negotiate these issues adequately will undermine staff trust. The contract, like the purpose, need not be carved in stone. After the team has worked together for some time, renegotiation of these expectations is definitely in order. Such renegotiation is needed any time a new staff person is added or lost. Nothing breeds frustration faster than feelings of discrimination, which tend to occur when there is ambiguity about what is expected of a person. Clarifying the purpose and expectations is critical during any time of transition. The more aware staff people are of the precise expectations of membership, the more productive the collaborative effort will be.

## HANDLING CONFLICT

Recently a pastor called to inquire about our availability to work with his staff. He perceived the last meeting of the parish staff as a disaster triggered by an inconsequential issue. This group of committed Christians had begun fighting among themselves, unleashing many uncomfortable feelings never before experienced at a meeting. The dreaded issue of conflict had emerged. All the issues these good ministers had been avoiding were released, and the bomb went off.

The major test of any group, especially a Christian collaborative group, is the ability to work through conflict. While conflict is inevitable, it is usually not prepared for and appreciated as growth-producing. In fact, most staffs put great energy into avoiding conflict at all costs. Well-played messages come to mind: "don't fight," "peace at any price," "don't lose control," "it isn't nice to be angry," and many more. Most church ministers expect a loving, respectful, nurturing environment and resist the idea of a hostile one. In fact, the needs that draw people to ministries are those that make conflict so fearful and dreaded.

Even with resistance, conflict is inevitable and necessary. Yes, it is necessary for the group to grow. In a collaborative setting, staff members begin connecting from strengths, expertise, and contributions related to professionalism and experience. The director of religious education is the expert in teaching the curriculum, the liturgist is strong in preparing services, the social worker contributes to outreach, and so forth. These areas of competency can quickly turn into "tursts" where power and control are exercised and where the expert has the last word. Yet the basic call of collaboration is for group input and involvement, which is richer than the sum of its parts. In order for this to take place, individual power and control have to be tempered. At this point it is natural for individuals to feel threatened and ambivalent. Conflict is the chaotic stage of a group, when competent and controlling staff members begin the necessary but painful process of dying to individuality

and rising toward a cohesive and unified group identity. This is never easy and definitely does not take place without some resistance.

The painful time of conflict is the time of greatest creativity. The reward is a cohesive collaborative group. Yet many staffs choose to regress and avoid growing to community. The pastor who sought assistance for his staff displayed wisdom in asking for it. Left to handle their problems on their own, this staff would probably have regressed because of the painful trauma of their meeting. With outside help, the staff members will be encouraged through the objective review and listening process to rediscover issues that for so long have been denied. Once the group has named these issues and discussed the underlying values, they will be able to manage or resolve the conflict and grow toward cohesion. Some guidelines for handling conflict are:

- Don't block it; let it come out. A special meeting in which the initial hostility can be defused may be necessary.
- Avoid the quick fix. Often there is the temptation to "escape to organization"—that is, to adopt new rules and procedures in order to avoid future conflict.
- Negotiate the norms for talking about the conflict with the group. This is needed for a consensus on how to "fight clean."
- Let each staff member reflect on and write about what he or she thinks is the issue of the conflict and why it is emerging.
- Create a trusting environment in which the norms are followed and people are encouraged to talk things out.

If there is a memory of a great staff experience, we can guarantee that at some point in the staff's life there was conflict that was managed or resolved. Unfortunately, struggle and how it was worked through is often forgotten. Staff members usually just focus on the euphoria of cohesion that follows the conflict.

Collaborative ministry at the staff level is being learned through experience. The possibility of healthy development is dependent on the clarity of the staff's purpose and tasks, the members' expectations of each other, and the strength to handle conflict positively.



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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

# WANTED:

## Lions Who Have Learned to Write

George Eppley, Ph.D.

**W**hile I believe that the United States needs to become a nation of readers, I believe that it is even more important for it to become a nation of writers. We need more poets, novelists, playwrights, essayists, humorists, and biographers who can give us first-quality products in our newspapers, bookstands, and theaters and on our television screens. Many priests and religious should be writers because they have the talent, the ability, and the experience to write. Unfortunately, most priests and religious do not write for publication.

In my judgment there are more people in the church who should write but do not than there are people who do write but should not. I have no way of proving that assertion statistically, and there are some who will dispute it. To be sure, some Catholics are very good writers, and their names may even be household names—but there should be many more. We need priests and religious who can use genres such as poems, short stories, novels, and television and movie scripts to present to the modern world the good news of Jesus.

Robert Maynard, the editor and publisher of the *Oakland Tribune*, tells in an essay the story of a young African child who came home from school quite upset. In class that day the boy's teacher had told the story of Tarzan, the king of the jungle. The

boy told his mother that he had thought the lion was king. His mother smiled at him and said, "Always will it be that way, my son, until the lions learn to write."

In the same essay Maynard also recalls a game that his father used to play with his children. He would ask how many followers Jesus had. The children would say they did not know, but it must have been in the thousands. Then he would ask how many they could name. They would name the apostles, but they remembered best those who had written down the accounts of what they had witnessed.

"Those were not necessarily the best servants. They were just the best writers who were servants," his father would say. Maynard adds, "Or, to put it another way, they were lions who had learned to write. . . ."

In the readership of this magazine (which numbers over 100,000) there are many lions who have learned to write. Only a few, however, write for this or any other magazine. James J. Gill, S.J., the editor-in-chief of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, told me he has begged priests and religious from all parts of the world to send in pieces for publication. Relatively few have responded. When I asked him why that is, he said that most priests and religious do not believe that they have anything to say. Or else

they don't believe there is anyone out there who wants to read what they write. I suspect there are other reasons, which I will discuss later in this article.

Here are some observations I have made in trying to hone my own craft of writing over a period of years.

**1. Remember that you are talented and that you are original.** This is something that Brenda Ueland wrote in 1938 in a remarkable book, *If You Want to Write*. My wife gave me a copy of it as a Christmas present two years ago; it's one of the best gifts I have ever received. Ueland reassures aspiring writers with these words: "Everyone is original, if he tells the truth, if he speaks from himself. But it must be from his *true* self and not the self he thinks he *should* be. . . . Consequently, if you speak or write from *yourself* you cannot help being original."

**2. Writing well is something that each of us can do.** It's not like a slam dunk in basketball, which requires that one be well over six feet tall. Even little people can write. Moreover, one who wants to make a career in basketball must start at a young age, whereas those who want to write can start at any age. And if they are good at writing, they can be in great demand.

If we know something about subjects and verbs and know how to put a sentence together, then we have the ability to write. The more we write, the better writers we can become. The key to a successful career path in many organizations is the ability to communicate through the spoken word and the written word. It's important to remember, I believe, that the person who can write well has the advantage over the person who can only speak well.

**3. Writing demands the discipline of putting something on paper every day.** William Zinsser, a well-known writer, once said that he does not like to write, but he likes having written. Like Zinsser, most writers are procrastinators who will do anything to avoid or delay a writing assignment. Why? Because writing means work. It often means loneliness and isolation. It brings doubts, anxieties, and frustration. The finished product, however, brings the reward.

What activity doesn't demand the discipline of practice? Luciano Pavarotti sings an aria beautifully and effortlessly. But think of the hours of practice he puts in every day of the year. James Galway plays the flute so enchantingly that we forget about the hours of practice he logs each day. Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson are superb basketball players; every day they spend hours on the court trying to perfect their games. These performers demand excellence of themselves.

We have to demand excellence of ourselves when writing. That means that we must give every writing effort our very best shot. It means also that we should write something every day in a journal.

Walter Lippmann, one of America's famous writers, tried to write a thousand words a day. Ray Bradbury, the science-fiction writer, writes in *Zen and the Art of Writing* that when he was twelve years old, he set a goal to write twelve hundred words a day. Naturally he was not able to do that every day. Here's what he says about those non-writing days: "You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you. . . . I have learned on my journeys that if I let a day go by without writing, I grow uneasy. Two days and I am in a tremor. Three and I suspect lunacy. Four, and I might as well be a hog, suffering the flux in a wallow. An hour's writing is a tonic. I'm on my feet, running in circles, and yelling for a clean pair of spats."

What Lippmann and Bradbury tried to do daily might be too ambitious for most, but certainly writing one hundred or two hundred words a day is not an unreasonable demand.

**4. To be an effective writer one must be a discriminating reader.** To put it another way, one must be in love with words and look for writers who have a way with words. I am not referring to those modern fiction writers who crank out a new novel once or twice a year. These authors may be great storytellers, but that does not necessarily mean that they are great writers whose prose style should be imitated. I urge readers to sample the writings of the great masters.

Read, for example, this paragraph from John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, in which he describes the wife of Samuel Hamilton: "Lisa Hamilton was a very different kettle of Irish. Her head was small and round and it held small round convictions. She had a button nose and a hard little set-back chin, a gripping jaw set on its course even though the angels of God argued against it." I often use that paragraph to show my students how a great writer such as Steinbeck uses one- and two-syllable words to craft a very effective description.

Or consider this passage from V. S. Pritchett's *At Home and Abroad*. Some years ago he wrote this about Cartagena, Colombia, where the United States and some South American countries held a drug summit recently: "The dome of the cathedral is checkered in white and cinnamon, the belfries of the church are as white as starch; and inside, you meet the golden rococo altars and the fine neglected Spanish cloisters with their palms. Yet Cartagena is not Spain, for it is an Indian and mulatto town. . . . Rows of mulatto girls sit at their sewing machines in the shops, black babies play naked around the shacks, and from the shrine on the burning green hill that dominates Cartagena you watch the vultures wheeling down and alight-

ing with their strange double bounce upon the refuse. Taxi drivers talk Hemingway."

Did Pritchett dash that paragraph off as he was riding to some airport? I think not. He probably labored days and weeks to cast that paragraph in its present form. Great writers such as Steinbeck and Pritchett teach us to work patiently and reverently with words.

Great writers teach us also to read the Bible daily. Although he was not a religious man, Ernest Hemingway read the King James Version of the Bible every day for stories and ideas. Critics recently have acclaimed Margaret Atwood, a Canadian writer, for her best-selling novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. In an interview with a *New York Times* critic, she was asked where she got the idea for this unusual book. She replied: "I was reading the Bible—some of us still do that, you know—and I saw the tale of Jacob and his wives and handmaids, a kind of early Baby M. This is not an attack on Christianity, but the fact is that Christians have long persecuted other sects and each other, as they are [doing] in Northern Ireland today."

I am not suggesting here that priests and religious read the Bible only to find ideas and stories. That certainly should not be the purpose of meditative readings of the Bible. But if a Hemingway and an Atwood are able to read the biblical message and cast it into stories about modern life, should not those who profess to be people of the Book be able to do the same? Do not the words of Isaiah apply here?

For as the rain and snow come  
down from heaven,  
And return not thither but water  
the earth,  
Making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread  
to the eater,  
So shall my word be that goes forth  
from my mouth;  
It shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which  
I purpose,  
And prosper in the things for which I  
sent it.

Is the Sunday homily the only form in which the word can prosper? Could not it prosper also in the form of a short story, a novel, a poem, a letter, a television play, a biography? I think so. Look at what Woody Allen has done with his marvelous movie *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. He has taken biblical questions and themes—the existence of an all-seeing God, adultery, murder, guilt, punishment—and integrated them into a powerful drama about modern life.

**5. To be a writer one must take time to reflect and to think.** There's so much happening in our lives that events and social obligations tend to over-

whelm us. We would do well to follow the example of Madeleine L'Engle, wife, mother, lecturer, and author of some delightful children's books. She writes in *A Circle of Quiet*: "Every so often I need out—away from all these people I love most—in order to regain a sense of proportion. My special place is a small brook in a green glade, a circle of quiet from which there is no visible sign of human beings." Those of us who aspire to be writers need our own circles of quiet—designated places to which we can retire to think, read, reflect, muse, write, contemplate, and if we are so inclined, pray.

I urge readers of this magazine to buy or borrow Anthony Storr's *Solitude: A Return to the Self*. In a chapter titled "The Uses of Solitude," Storr tells how in the winter of 1934 Admiral Richard Byrd insisted on being stationed alone at the advanced weather base in Antarctica. Byrd wanted not just the experience of recording observations about the weather but also the opportunity to learn the value of solitude. Storr includes some lines that Byrd wrote about that experience: "Aside from the meteorological and auroral work, I had no important purpose. There was nothing of that sort. Nothing, whatever, except one man's desire to know that kind of experience to the full, to be by himself for a while and to taste peace and quiet and solitude long enough to find out how good they really are."

**6. To be a writer one must be willing to be criticized and even rejected.** Somehow I think that's why many priests and religious who should write don't write. They are not willing to take the heat. When we write for publication, we are laying out our thoughts and ideas. We become vulnerable. We invite criticism and ask for acceptance or rejection.

Recently I met a 40-year-old priest, a college professor, who was in one of my high-school English classes some years ago. A brilliant student, he turned in essays and reports that showed he was a gifted writer and a creative thinker. As a high-school freshman he submitted pieces that many college seniors would have liked to have written.

I asked him if he was doing any writing now. He said that he had not written anything since his doctoral dissertation seven years ago. "I am not interested in writing articles for magazines that only fifteen or twenty people will read," he said.

"Well," I countered, "what about writing opinion pieces for the local papers or for national magazines and newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*? Why not write something for *Commonweal*, *America*, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*?"

"I should," he said, "but I guess I am afraid of getting verbally attacked by a lot of crazies out there." By "crazies" he means those rabid, far-right, one-issue Catholics who Father Richard McBrien of Notre Dame says cannot control their

psychological bowels: "They want to crap all over you." What he has to remember is that while such people are very adept at "crapping," they are not too adept at writing.

I suspect there's another reason why this priest does not write. He's afraid, I think, of the criticism that will inevitably come from his peers. Unfortunately, too many priests and religious are not supportive of those who rise above their peers and gain attention from speaking or writing or devising innovative and creative ways to minister to people. I know this from personal experience as a diocesan priest for twenty-seven years.

After my ordination in 1949, it was my good fortune to be stationed at St. Mary Church in Elyria, Ohio, where Monsignor William L. Newton was pastor. A scripture scholar, he had taught at the Catholic University and Saint Mary Seminary. In the 1940s he was instrumental in giving the church in America the Confraternity edition of the Bible. Newton had translated the Gospel of Saint John for the New Testament and the books of the minor prophets for the Old Testament.

One evening, Newton said something to me that I remember four decades later. He told me that the major vice of the priesthood is not women, not money, not alcohol. The major vice is jealousy. During his lifetime, many priests and religious were jealous of Newton.

What Newton said is not too different from what Brenda Ueland wrote half a century ago: "How does the creative impulse die in us? The English teacher who wrote fiercely on the margin of your theme in blue pencil: 'Trite, rewrite,' helped kill it. Critics kill it, your family. Families are great mur-

derers of the creative impulse, particularly husbands. Older brothers sneer at younger brothers and kill it. There is that American pastime known as 'kidding'—with the result that everyone is ashamed and hang-dog about showing the slightest enthusiasm or passion or sincere feeling about anything. . . ."

Too many priests and religious of my acquaintance are notorious "kidders." They would never condone the killing of an unborn child. But by their "kidding" they have cooperated in killing the creative spirit in many young priests and religious and have aborted ideas that might have changed the course of a parish, a city, or a nation.

Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia, was in Washington recently to meet the president and address a joint session of Congress. Havel, a playwright, who spent years in prison because of his opposition to the repressive policies of his government, was acclaimed leader of his people when the Communists were recently overthrown. The lesson is that we should never underestimate the power of the written word, even when used by people such as ourselves.



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## Teen Girls Increase Sexual Activity

**A** recent survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, showed that sexual activity among young American women has nearly doubled during the past twenty years, to the point that half of those age 15 to 19 have had premarital sex. The findings revealed that 25.6 percent of 15-year-old girls have engaged in sexual intercourse. The figure reaches 75.3 percent for those who have reached the age of 19.

Dr. Sergi Aral, a sociologist at the CDC's Center for Prevention Services, observed, "This is happening during a time when we are putting so much emphasis on public-health messages regarding the risks of sexual activity, because of the AIDS crisis." She believes that "the explosion among young women starting sex is a product of our times."

Between 1970 and 1988 the percentage of 15-year-

old girls who had engaged in premarital sex at least once increased more than fivefold, from 4.6 percent to 25.6 percent. For 17-year-olds the increase was from 32.3 percent to 51 percent. For 19-year-olds it was 48.2 percent in 1970 and 75.3 percent in 1988. Dr. Aral laments, "We do not give very clear, unidirectional messages to our adolescents. We say 'Just say no. Delay the initiation of sex. Be monogamous.' But in a lot of our popular mass-media messages, we're putting so much emphasis on sexuality, and glamorizing sexuality."

People who are trying to prevent the spread of AIDS by warning adolescents about the risks of sexual activity are experiencing little if any success. The CDC researchers have concluded that "many young people apparently didn't get the message."

# Helping Incest Survivors in Religious Life

Rosemarie Nassif, S.S.N.D., Ph.D., and Carole Shinnick, S.S.N.D., A.C.S.W.

**I**n recent years religious congregations have begun to recognize that many of their members come from dysfunctional families. Furthermore, they have recognized that these members affect the whole system of the religious congregation through their behavior.

A dysfunctional family is one in which the unresolved issues of one or some members dominate the entire system to such an extent that all its members suffer. Individuals play fixed roles that freeze their personal development. The family follows rules, the main purpose of which is to maintain the status quo. These rules also keep the family members from actualizing their potential. Some indicators of a family's dysfunction—chemical dependency, abuse in any form, dissolution of the marital bond, trouble with the law—often come in clusters. We are only beginning to understand the impact these factors have on the children in such families. That impact continues to be felt by all the systems of which these "adult children" become a part, including religious life.

A major aspect of the refoundation and renewal of religious life today involves facing and dealing with the realities of its systemic dysfunctions. Insofar as these realities are ignored, to that extent they will continue to have a corrosive effect on religious life. Insofar as they are named, addressed, and treated, to that extent religious life will be-

come healthier and more functional.

Within recent years dysfunctions that have been explored include chemical addictions and addictions to food and mood-altering substances, particularly as these addictions affect individuals within community. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT has published several articles about addictions and their impact on community life, including "The Religious Alcoholic," by James J. Gill (Winter 1980), "Addiction Affects Community," by Ann Marie Krupski (Fall 1985), "Chemical Dependency among Religious Ministers," by Gerald Dooher (Summer 1987), and "Recovery from Addiction," by Eileen Stenzel (Winter 1988). In a related vein, religious communities continue to explore co-dependency, the dysfunction that affects an individual who is in a relationship with a chemically dependent person. Awareness seems to be growing about adult children from alcoholic homes, many of whom seem to have been attracted to the stability and protection once offered by religious life (see "Understanding the Children of Alcoholic Parents," by Sean Sammon in the Fall 1987 issue of this journal).

## SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

Awareness is now dawning that many individuals in religious life need healing because they are

adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In their article "Incest Survivors in Women's Communities" (HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Summer 1987), Mary Jakubiak and Sheila Murphy state, "It is naive to assume that women religious are magically exempt from the victim population. These incest survivors carry not only the burden of their 'hidden secret' but also the silent agony of trying to reconcile childhood abuse with current vocations and relationships."

Recovery from incest is a slow, long, and painful process. Incest is probably the single most traumatizing experience that a child can suffer in her or his development. In her book *Betrayal of Innocence: Incest and Its Devastation*, Susan Forward tells the reader:

Incest is almost always a devastating experience for the victim. Its emotional and psychological impact is destructive for several reasons—partly because of our cultural reactions to incest, to a greater degree because the child is thrust into an adult role for which he or she is unprepared and, most tragically, because of the aggressor's betrayal of the child's trust and dependence. . . . Its devastation is greater than that of non-incestuous child molestation or rape because incest is set within a constellation of family emotions and conflicts. One of the factors that intensifies the trauma as the child grows into adulthood is the secrecy and the resulting isolation that surrounds the individual's personal experience.

Recognizing the need to educate religious communities to the reality that some of their members are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and conscious that the survivors themselves need a safe place where they can talk about and deal with their experiences, the co-vicar for religious and the counselor for religious in the archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri, collaborated on three different programs for incest survivors. The programs each had a different focus—educational, spiritual, or therapeutic. The educational program was open to all members of religious communities who wished to learn more about sexual abuse and its impact on both individuals and community. The other two programs were geared toward the survivors themselves and were designed to help break down the individuals' isolation by building up support systems.

**Workshop for Understanding Women Religious Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.** This workshop was a one-day experience for spiritual directors, counselors, therapists, friends, community members, formation personnel, congregation leaders, and survivors of sexual abuse. The goal was to provide an opportunity to learn more about the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the adult woman religious, on her relationships, and on her community living. This workshop focused specifically on the experiences of women religious. A

decision was made not to open registration to men, because it was felt that their presence could create a different dynamic and atmosphere for the women survivors who attended. Over 150 women participated, representing thirty-five congregations from six different states. Many expressed gratitude for the sensitive atmosphere, safe environment, helpful input, and healthy interaction.

The registration fee was ten dollars for the day so that the attendees could avoid being conspicuous for making a large financial request from their communities.

The theme of the day was "Choose Life." The day included three presentations by a nationally recognized expert on sexual abuse. She addressed such topics as the prevalence of sexual abuse, related dysfunctions, anger, the recovery process, therapeutic approaches, and some implications for religious life. A panel of four women religious responders—a formation director, a spiritual director, a provincial councilor, and a psychologist—commented on the input from their personal and ministerial perspectives. In the large group discussion many comments surfaced, several from women who openly identified themselves as survivors. This experience provided specific insights for the authors of this article:

1. Given the number of women who participated, the topic of sexual abuse is a significant issue for women religious and has a widespread impact on religious life.
2. There is an openness among women religious today—perhaps more than ever before—to look at and deal with this issue.
3. It is valid to offer such an experience specifically for women religious.
4. Survivors want to be supported and understood—most of all by their own religious community.
5. There is value in offering such an educational opportunity, which allows survivors to participate without specifically identifying themselves.
6. If the environment is safe enough, survivors will be able to identify themselves openly—even in a large group of more than 150 persons—and to share their stories in the desire to be more understood and more appropriately supported.

**Retreat for Survivors.** Some of the participants in the workshop recommended that a retreat be offered. In light of that recommendation, a weekend-long "Choose Life" retreat for women religious survivors of childhood sexual abuse was organized. It included five conferences, small-group and large-group sharing, and opportunity for individual spiritual direction. There were eleven retreatants and four staff members, one of whom had been the presenter at the previous workshop. The input centered on the topics of prayer, anger, healing,

## The issue of confidentiality needs to be openly addressed at the outset

trust, and image of God. It took great courage for survivors to commit themselves to this retreat because their presence automatically identified them as childhood victims.

The retreat setting was comfortable, informal, and aesthetically beautiful. All scheduled events—meals, conferences, group sharing, prayer—were optional. All of this created an atmosphere in which the retreatants had the freedom to choose solitude or togetherness. The survivors and staff agreed to maintain strict confidentiality concerning the identity of the retreatants and the content of what was shared.

In an open-dialogue evaluation, retreatants expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to share and deal with issues related to their experiences of God. Several expressed the desire to reconvene in the future in order to move another step forward and to share how this retreat experience had enabled them to do so. This retreat offered several specific insights:

1. Because of the vulnerability of the retreatants, a certain amount of awkwardness and discomfort among the participants can be anticipated when they initially come together.
2. Issues pertaining to the experience of God by women religious survivors are both painful and significant.
3. Survivors will share deeply about their lives with God, given a safe and comfortable environment.
4. Because participation involves automatic identification, some survivors will be hesitant to attend such a retreat.

5. The issue of confidentiality needs to be openly addressed from the outset.

**Group for Incest Survivors.** Since 1987 the Counseling Service for Religious in St. Louis has offered a support group for women religious who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The meetings of this group are time-limited (i.e., usually held in a series of ten to twelve sessions) and are scheduled once a week for an hour and a half. Toward the end of each series, however, there is an opportunity to extend the sessions by two to six additional meetings. The number of additional sessions is dependent on the needs of the group and its commitment to extending the series.

The purpose of such groups is threefold: to provide a setting in which women religious can explore their incest issues, particularly (though not exclusively) insofar as they impact living religious life; to educate and inform survivors about the dynamics and the impact of sexual abuse; and to further the therapeutic effect of individual therapy within the group setting.

The group size ranges between four and six participants. Effort is made to allow only one member from any single religious congregation to participate in the group. Exceptions have been made when two members from the same religious congregation are willing to be in the group together. The primary reason for this guideline is protection of individuals' anonymity. It is also required that each person in the group be in individual therapy.

The format of the group has varied. Sometimes it has centered on reading the participants have done outside the sessions and reflection questions they have used prior to coming. At other times, group members have used a workbook specifically designed for incest-survivor therapy groups. Some groups have identified themes around which they wish to center the group's interaction.

The overall effect of these support groups seems to be quite positive. The participants develop a support system in which they feel safe and accepted. They experience a breakdown of the isolation that has kept them alienated from themselves and from others. They share progress as they work through different stages of recovery and are affirmed and applauded by others who truly understand the triumph each milestone represents. They learn about developing healthier relationships in the very process of relating within the group. They share "tips for survival"—ways of coping that have been effective in their own recovery processes. In addition, because of the unique composition of the group, the participants feel free to explore community-related issues that they might hesitate to mention in a group that does not understand religious life. On the whole, these groups have enhanced individual therapy and seem to provide a forum

tailored to the needs of women religious who are incest survivors.

The most significant insight gained from the experience of sponsoring these groups is that incest has unique ramifications for the survivor vowed to celibacy and living in community. Consequently, a support group of women religious survivors provides a setting in which to explore these issues with others who understand and who live the same life-style.

The present time seems to be a period of refinement, renewal, renovation, and refoundation in religious life. An aspect of this process includes exploring the impact of individual histories on the quality of community life and ministry. Therefore, it seems timely, as we come to grips with our "functional" and "dysfunctional" realities, that we accept the fact that many members of religious congregations have been the victims of childhood sexual abuse. The programs we have described proved to be positive and well-received. We hope that other archdiocesan offices will be encouraged to sponsor similar opportunities for incest survivors and for those who wish to learn more about the incest experience.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Bass, E., and L. Thornton, eds. *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

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Daughtery, L. *Why Me?* Racine, Wisconsin: Mother Courage Press, 1984.



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## Estrogen May Lengthen Women's Lives

**T**he synthetic form of estrogen, the female sex hormone, has for many years been recognized as capable of preventing broken bones, heart disease, strokes, hot flashes, and other menopausal symptoms. However, taken in pill form, it was also thought to increase a woman's risk of breast and uterine cancer.

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Southern California Medical School has recently found that women who take estrogen after menopause may live longer than other postmenopausal women. The study's results, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, suggest that estrogen's ability to prevent heart disease outweighs its risk of causing cancer. Also demonstrated, according to USC epidemiologist Dr. Ronald Ross, is that "the longer you're on estrogen, the longer you live."

For eight years the USC team studied 8,881 women at a retirement community. The researchers analyzed the death rates among the 4,988 women who had received estrogen replacement therapy for any length of time and the 3,893 who had never used hormones.

They found that the longer a woman stayed on estrogen, the greater her life-span advantage tended to be. There were 40 percent fewer deaths among women on estrogen for fifteen years or more.

Dr. Ross reported that the USC researchers found no greater risk of breast cancer among women taking estrogen, no matter how long they received it. However, estrogen replacement therapy is not recommended to postmenopausal women with a family history of breast cancer, breast cysts diagnosed as atypical hyperplasia, fibroid tumors, or endometriosis. Dr. Meir Stampfer of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, commented on the study: "Everything we know about estrogen suggests it reduces mortality . . . primarily through improving cardiovascular health and [preventing] osteoporosis." The study's chief author, Dr. Brian Henderson, concluded, "It appears that most women [on estrogen] will benefit, not just by reduction in heart disease deaths but [also by reduction in] death from strokes."

# Organizations Must Ritually Grieve

Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., Ph.D.

**G**rief is experienced by groups and organizations as well as by individuals. Grief is the sorrow, anger, denial, guilt, and confusion that so often accompany significant loss—for example, the death of a friend, the loss of a job, the closure of an institution. Yet unless the cultures of groups and organizations acknowledge that loss has occurred and formally let it go, they—and the individuals within them—remain haunted by or trapped in the past, unable to open themselves to new ways of thinking and acting. Rightly did Ovid claim that “suppressed grief suffocates” creativity.

I believe that a major reason for the reluctance or hesitation of religious congregations, parishes, and dioceses to attempt renewal is their failure to mourn or ritually detach themselves from that which is lost or no longer apostolically relevant. Energy that should be directed toward creating the future is instead spent on efforts to restore or retain that which is lost or dying.

A culture has a life of its own and is apt to defend itself against anxiety-evoking realities such as any form of significant loss. I will describe the stages of group or culture grief and then briefly show how religious congregational cultures can be helped to face loss constructively.

## CULTURES GRIEVE TOO

By culture I mean a pervasive “pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of . . . concep-

tions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop . . . attitudes toward life” (Clifford Geertz). These symbolic forms or rules of interaction operate most powerfully at the level of the unconscious. Anthropologist Edward Hall maintains that the culture unconscious, like Freud’s unconscious, controls our actions and can be grasped only through difficult and challenging analyses.

Culture is not something static. Like individuals, cultures can at times put an emphasis on openness to reality, joy, or depression. And as individuals do in their journey through life, cultures develop defense mechanisms (e.g., through repression, regression, or denial) against anxiety-creating facts, feelings, or thoughts. If defense mechanisms become chronically embedded in a culture, they haunt the members of the culture and keep them from facing objective reality. Thus, anthropologically, we speak of a “culture of denial,” a “culture of depression,” or a “sick culture”; unless the denial is confronted, the culture dies. Any inner resources for renewal are suffocated by blindness deep within the culture unconscious.

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A recent personal involvement in a tragic train crash has made me far more sensitive than before to the reality of the culture unconscious and denial. I was in the front car of a commuter train that

smashed into a stationary train in an isolated part of the country. I survived, but others were not so lucky. The survivors escaped into an unharmed car, and there a great spirit of mutual assistance emerged; people joked and laughed, and some even sang, as though they were at a party.

It took an hour for relief workers to reach us. When the first police officer entered our coach, I heard him exclaim in a tone of amazement, even condemnation: "Don't you people know what has happened?" Having seen the horrific sights in the front car and some of the blood-covered injured among us, he simply could not understand why we all seemed so happy. I said to myself, "Why is he so surprised? Of course we know what has happened!" I felt he was insulting our intelligence. Then I realized that a culture of denial had spontaneously emerged on our train car to help the group cope with the enormity of the disaster and that it had influenced my own feelings without my being aware of it. The officer had immediately sensed this denial and had instinctively reacted against it. Until that moment of reflection, I had been totally unaware of the impact of the culture of denial on my own behavior.

Denial is perhaps the most common of the defense mechanisms. It is simply the effort to disavow any unpleasant or unwanted piece of reality. As long as it does not become chronic or habitual, denial offers individuals and cultures opportunities to develop resources for coping with loss. The culture deludes itself into believing that nothing has changed; any fact that threatens to undermine this delusion is rejected. I, and others, rejected the police officer's exclamation because, although in our heads we accepted the facts of death and injury, our coach culture encouraged our hearts to deny the full force of that ghastly reality. The denial evoked regressive behavior; the jokes and laughter of the adults among us were akin to those of high-school students.

## STAGES OF GRIEVING

Grieving is a process that involves several identifiable stages. However, the process of organizational (and individual) grieving is extremely complex, and no one model of stages can possibly grasp this complexity. Moreover, the process of movement through the stages is by no means automatic. In fact, organizational cultures can become locked in at one stage and may even regress to an earlier stage. Cultures can also attempt to jump stages in order to avoid painful experiences. The fact is that individuals and cultures must freely decide to work through their loss—and this is rarely easy.

At least three major stages of cultural grieving can commonly be identified. The first stage is marked by a feeling of numbness and the symptoms of resistance to the reality of loss, as described

above. There may also be a yearning or nostalgia for what has been lost, as well as restlessness, despair, or anger, which may be directed indiscriminately against friends, God, another culture, superiors, or even oneself as the assumed cause of the grief and ensuing depression.

In the second stage a culture feels attracted by both the security of the past and the call to face the future. This is a period of sometimes anxious reflection. The temptation is for the organization to cling tenaciously to what has been lost and refuse to face the future. If this continues, chronic grief takes over, and it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the organization to move out of the escapist depression. The organization just "loves" being miserable; this gives it a warped sense of identity or belonging.

The third stage may be called the recovery, or reaggregation, phase. The bereaved organization is able to look with marked detachment at what has been lost; it realizes that life must now go on and that the best of the past must be carried over into the future.

## TRADITIONAL DEATH RITUALS

A culture's method of relating to physical bereavement reflects how it copes with other significant loss. In traditional societies people are especially aware of the fact that a community has a life of its own. For example, when a death occurs, the entire community is affected, not just particular individuals. A set of social relationships is destroyed by a death, and a new set must be established if the community is to hold together and survive. If the death is not acknowledged, the new order of relationships cannot emerge. Emile Durkheim, a founding father of sociology, wrote early in this century that "mourning is not a natural movement of private feelings wounded by a cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by the group." No member of a traditional culture is allowed to be indifferent to a death in that culture's midst. By collectively mourning, the members express their solidarity and, in doing so, overcome and repair the loss. Durkheim's comment is rather cynical, but he is right about the need for the community to mourn ritually.

By ritual I mean the stylized or repetitive, symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture within a social context in order to express and articulate meaning. Ritual action occurs within a social context; it is undertaken to resolve or hide the potential or real tensions or conflicts inherent in social relations. Rituals in traditional cultures, by not hiding the reality of loss, seek to resolve these tensions and conflicts to allow new life to emerge.

There are normally two levels of oppositional disengagement / engagement processes at work within traditional death rituals. First, there is a

# Western societies do everything they can to camouflage death and repress it from consciousness

ritual process that is directed at the deceased. The dead are formally disengaged from the living; they are given permission, as it were, to leave this world and to become engaged in relationships with other spirits elsewhere. They are assigned to a new, esteemed, and safe status—that of tradition. The Australian aborigines, for example, believe that the spirit is independent of flesh, in the sense that it outlasts the disunion from it, but the spirit is thought to haunt its former “home.” It must be formally encouraged to move on if it is to become an honored ancestor in tradition.

The second set of disengagement / engagement rituals relates directly to the living, who must formally become disengaged from the negative influences of the deceased and engage themselves in forming a new set of social relationships or a new culture.

Commonly, in traditional cultures, these two processes take place within a span of three stages. The pattern is the same as that described earlier. First there is the separation stage, in which the rituals vigorously encourage the community to admit that death has occurred. Then, in the liminality stage, the community concentrates, over a lengthy period of time, on the two processes of disengagement and engagement. Finally, rituals mark the end of mourning, and the community turns to concentrating on living out the new set of social relationships.

Among the Kwaio people of the Solomon Islands, the liminality period, which follows dramatic separation rituals, begins with a community wake on the tenth day after a death. People stay up all night with the bereaved immediate family, eating and, often, listening to the recitation of epic chants until

the early hours of the morning. A similar wake is held every ten days until the hundredth day, when a “finishing-off wake” is celebrated with a larger-scale presentation of food. The immediate family of the deceased then remains in public mourning—a state that involves dishevelment (men allow facial and head hair to grow, and people are generally unkempt)—until, months later, a final mortuary feast is given to mark the movement into the third stage, the reaggregation period. By this point it is expected that new relationships within the community have been established and that the spirit of the deceased has finally been put to rest with the other ancestors.

## DENIAL IN WESTERN CULTURES

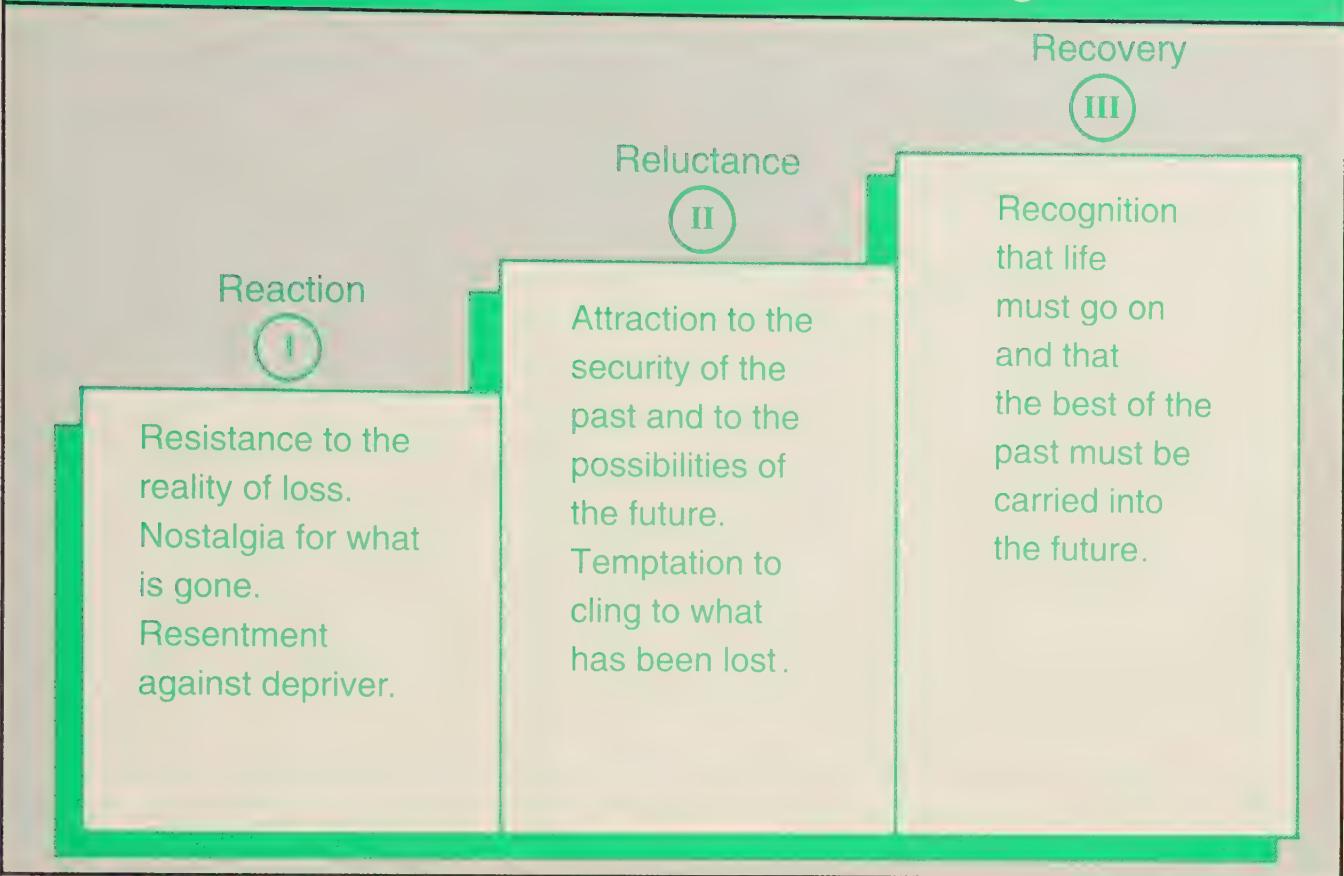
Much has been written on the fact that unlike traditional cultures, Western societies do everything they can to camouflage death and repress it from consciousness.

Of the three stages—separation, liminality, and reaggregation—only the third is stressed. Thus, the dual oppositional processes of disengagement and engagement cannot be realized. Only the process of engaging the bereaved in social interaction again is vigorously emphasized. Those who experience loss must avoid showing emotion of any kind; they are considered “strong and brave.” Should they unfortunately break down and cry, it must be done with discretion, especially if they are men. The dead remain socially unburied.

This culturally fostered denial of grief has effectively removed from Western societies rituals that are a critical source of support, challenge, and renewal for those who experience loss. Inevitably, this encourages all kinds of pathological individual and group reactions to significant loss. The past haunts us; we simply have lost the cultural art of knowing how to exorcise its powerful hold on our emotions and memories. We are held back from discovering in the chaos of loss, and this hurts our potential for growth and creativity.

The driving force within Western capitalistic cultures is the secularized Judeo-Christian myth of death and resurrection. It is a corrupted myth; a this-world resurrection is overemphasized, and the pain of death is downplayed or ignored. The authentic Christian creation myth, however, is that God, in Christ, calls us to communities of faith, in and through which we must struggle together to develop a world of compassion and justice. Our struggle, though imperfect, is itself the sign of the perfect world of love and justice that will exist, the “new heavens and new earth where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside” (2 Peter 3:13). This perfection in the world to come will depend on our own willingness to be “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:19). We thus disengage ourselves, as communities and individuals, from all

# Stages of Cultural Grieving



that is not of Christ. Then we become so dead to the past, and so engaged in Christ's life, that with St. Paul we say, "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Everything—structures, attitudes, organizations within cultures—must be measured by this creation story that we are called daily to relive. Faithfulness to the Lord is determined not by conformity to a particular institution or method of evangelization but by conformity to his ever-renewing redemptive purposes. The ongoing admission of dying or death to whatever does not conform to these purposes is an imperative for faithfulness.

## LOSS AND CONGREGATIONAL CULTURES

The following two case studies illustrate what happens when religious congregational cultures resist facing the realities of loss.

### Case Study 1: A General Chapter in Grief

The general administration prepared the congregation for the chapter over a two-year period, and the assistance of a facilitator—a discernment ex-

pert—was obtained for the preparation and for the chapter itself. The theme of the preparatory period was "integral conversion for mission." During the chapter, at the request of the provincials, the faith-oriented discernment process was to be given priority, rather than the customary parliamentary debating system. The congregation's provincials had approved of this several months prior to the start of the chapter.

When the chapter opened, two important events occurred. The facilitator, at the instigation of a small national group, was subtly but effectively told he was no longer needed. The chapter culture accepted this decision without hesitation. Also, the participants were invited to discuss, over several days, the implications of the superior general's detailed and thorough report on the state of the congregation. However, the discussion was far shorter than originally planned, and critically important issues in the report were ignored (e.g., declining membership, clericalism, the poverty of pastoral creativity). Participants moved quickly to the writing of visionary documents. Delegates enjoyed debating (according to well-known parliamentary rules) over minutiae within the docu-

ments that took no account of the existential conditions detailed in the superior general's report. In the large committee established to write the mission statement, threatening topics such as liberation theology and inculcation were ignored. Several times individuals attempted to introduce these themes for discussion but were quickly marginalized as dangerous leftists. In their evaluations of the chapter, most members indicated that they considered it to have been "a great success," "an experience of congregational fraternity at its best."

The case study illustrates the power of denial within the chapter's culture unconscious. The appointed facilitator and the superior general's report were too anxiety-creating. Once the facilitator had been skillfully marginalized into a powerless position, the way was open for regressive behavior—that is, the return to language and ways of conducting the chapter that did not threaten the security of the participants. There is an element of truth in Durkheim's view that religion is the act whereby a group worships itself. In a burst of corporate denial, groups can be swept away by their own dreams of a grandiose present and future. They believe that their dreams are the reality; it happened at this chapter. The participants' visionary statements became verbal and enthusiastic acts of self-worship. In an atmosphere of fervent self-congratulation, it is very difficult—often impossible—for any member, other than a chapter's elected officials or a facilitator, to call the group back to reality.

Anne Wilson Schaef sees grandiosity as one of the symptoms of the addictive society; it is pretending that the group is more, or something other, than what it is. The culture of the chapter became an addictive substance, rendering its members powerless to look at the death symptoms within its own organizational system and the congregation at large. Chapter members became hooked on their own visionary statements and chose not to see that without radical individual and culture conversion, which would have demanded a journey in and through the darkness of faith, change could not be realized.

### **Case Study 2: A Province in Depression**

I quote from an observer's description of her province, which is denying the need for bold and creative apostolic action. Such action cannot be taken until the province acknowledges that the past cannot be restored.

Up to a decade ago we were receiving many candidates into our formation program. The future seemed really bright. Then quite dramatically the numbers dropped off. Our provincial chapters made many statements about this and they made people feel fine; they believed that there would be change because the

documents said there would be. But nothing happened. We began later to have a sinking feeling that we might even die out as a province. Last year the congregational leadership team asked all houses to have meetings to discuss the last chapter statements about the future in light of declining numbers. Well, we had meetings and more meetings . . . but we got nowhere. If there is another meeting to discuss the future, we will scream. . . . The meetings just drifted.

Recently we suddenly decided to close several of our hospitals. This has led to a lot of anger and ill-feeling between members, because one hospital that is being closed is the foundation community of our province. "If that goes," many say, "that is the end! We must do everything we can to keep it going!" Many of us claim our congregational leadership is doing nothing. When they visit they just speak of good things. Frankly, we are confused, even paralyzed, in the presence of all the problems. One group in our province wrote a paper recently and said that there is no real problem provided we returned to our old apostolates and did things just as we did them before. I really don't know what to think.

The province's culture has never before known periods of numerical decline or apostolic confusion. From the time of its foundation several decades ago, recruits had entered annually in good numbers, and new apostolates had developed. But this pattern is no more. Now the culture is in grief, and defense mechanisms chronically insulate the province against the realities of dying and death. The official leadership of the province is paralyzed, believing that documents and smooth words alone will help the province out of the chaos.

### **RITUALLY CHALLENGING DENIAL**

Since we Westerners have culturally lost the art of dying, we must build appropriate rituals of loss, that the new and creative may enter into our lives and congregations. Mourning rituals of traditional cultures, including the cultures of the Old and New Testaments, can guide us.

In a traditional culture, the community's leaders exercise a pivotal role in challenging the culture to recognize loss and the dangers of chronic denial in all its devious forms. After the ascension of Jesus, his disciples were in grave danger of denying the fact that he was no longer with them. Their loss and denial had to be openly articulated and dealt with; otherwise, they would not be open to the dramatic, transforming newness of the Spirit. Luke describes the role of the two angels as ritual community leaders: the disciples "were still gazing up into the heavens when two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee . . . why do you stand here looking up at the skies?' " (Acts 1:11). Jesus was disengaging himself from his followers and achieving a new status beside his Father. The disciples were encouraged to move to the next stage of the grieving ritual. They left for an upper

room in Jerusalem—their liminality experience—in order to pray over and to ponder the loss and the vision of the promised, fear-creating newness yet to come at Pentecost: “Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer” (Acts 1:14).

At Emmaus, Jesus himself is the ritual leader, challenging the two disciples to own up to their loss and to that of their community in a creative way. Jesus leads them through the first stage of separation, in which they freely express their anger and sadness that things had not turned out as they had so sincerely hoped. Jesus does not judge or condemn their anger (Luke 24:17–24). They then enter the liminality phase of their ritual journey; here Jesus, having obtained their trust, strongly challenges them to recognize and accept their loss. This will open them to a community and personal newness beyond human imagination as a result of Jesus’ death and resurrection (Luke 14:25–32).

Jesus, and Moses before him, model for us the role and qualities of congregational ritual leaders. They are future-oriented or hope-filled people, since they believe their primary task is to challenge a culture to interiorize a vision not yet realized. They recognize that the group is locked into unconscious denial of loss; they believe they must publicly articulate this refusal to face uncomfortable realities, even though the process of confrontation may isolate them as leaders. Their task, difficult though it is, is to empower the group to assume responsibility for its own mourning. The temptation to allow the group to become overly dependent on the ritual leader must be resisted at all costs. Neither Moses nor Jesus succumbed to this temptation. As the reaggregation stage for the Israelites is about to begin—the entrance into the promised land—Moses slips away, in a spirit of remarkable patience and detachment, to die alone on a mountain and to rest in an unmarked grave (Deut. 34:1–7). When the two disciples at Emmaus are in danger of becoming overly dependent on Jesus’ presence, Jesus withdraws to allow them to test their new-found apostolic strength by returning to Jerusalem—the reaggregation phase of their ritual of loss (Luke 24:30–35).

In the two case studies of chaos and denial in religious congregations, those with official author-

ity refused to exercise the ritual functions that are integral to their leadership role. In the first, at the general chapter, the officially appointed moderators were aware that the culture was in denial but refused to confront the group with this unpopular fact. They hoped that things would turn out right in the end if allowed to drift long enough, but that did not happen. Thus, the chapter missed an opportunity to challenge the congregation to face death and experience newness.

In the second case study, congregational leadership thought that documents alone would lead to group conversion. Instead, they should have developed their role of ritual leadership of a grieving process within the province culture, both personally and through delegates. As long as they fail to do this, the province will not face the task of fostering bold apostolic initiatives adapted to the most urgent needs of today.

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# Impediments

James Sorren, S.J.

The heroism of snails, house on back!  
I am terrified of my baggage, sitting smack center  
in a rash of books, crating. What can I do without?  
The answer's piddling. Also I sack up  
wool sweaters, sweatclothes, slacks, stitched  
shirts, a London Fog coat. No fabric  
lacks. And a clog of pennies,  
pins, pencils, stubs, rubber bands. Dust  
everywhere; coughing racks me, or a split  
head. What mounds of paper! The pulp mills  
turning jack pine into the *Chronicle*, the *Monitor*,  
heap me in stained leaves. Urgent  
and official letters have been lost track.  
Only a fanatic with tweezer probe  
layer through layer could crack  
their mystery. I sit reading,  
shredding. The mess thickens. I close my eyes.  
Goods come for transportation, on and on.  
I pray for the knack. I recall  
tottering into woods with the essentials  
squeezed into one pack.

by the sheer volume of my essentials. I had, after all, redistributed about half of my books and carried box upon box of detritus—old *New Yorkers*, newsletters, promotional materials, catalogs, worn shirts and slippers, medicines hardly used—to the dumpster. I left behind framed pictures, backpacking equipment, and toiletries abundant. Yet I went off with a baggage train of thirty boxes! To tell the full truth, I was a few hours short of finishing when the hour of departure struck, and I rushed off to the airport, leaving the cleanup operation to the monks at Santa Clara.

This experience of sheer accumulation unsettled me. It seemed to knock into a cocked hat all pretensions to religious poverty. From where I write now, in fact, I look down from a ninth-story window upon one of the homeless who has lived for several years outside our building. When she wants to go anywhere or get out of a coming rainstorm, she packs up a couple of neat bundles and is off. That's poverty; it is also selectivity and desperate determination. As for me, the pile is mounting again.

During the countdown hours at Santa Clara, one of the pages I came upon was my poem "Impediments," written for a previous migration. I like the word *impediments* because of its Latin root, *impedimenta*, meaning baggage, things that weigh heavy on a march. (The poem can be dated somewhat from the fact that the *Monitor*, San Francisco's archdiocesan newspaper, ceased publication about 1983.) Upon rereading my own words, my eyes went wide, not just at the identical parade of details but at the identical feelings expressed on an earlier date. Our lives do provide us with continual reruns of our most embarrassing moments.

A more recent episode figures in my musings. On the third Sunday of Advent, finishing mass in a women's prison facility, I set out to distribute a number of Christmas cards that had been donated for the inmates. There was a generous supply—

**L**ate August of last year found me sitting on the floor in my room in Nobili Hall, Santa Clara University, sorting out. I wanted to cull the superfluous from my eight file drawers rather than lug the lot across the country to New York City. I might have saved myself some trouble with a more radical solution, because about a third of the prized files, crated precariously, never made it through the U.S. mail. But I was in no frame of mind to cut so sharply. Such is the much-feared process known as moving.

Thirty boxes eventually followed me, at their own pace, to New York. I was stunned, and still am,

cards of six or seven different designs, enough of each for everybody. Alas, the various cards were intermixed, and Sister Carmela, whom I assist, was not present that day to ensure their orderly distribution. So, after a peaceful liturgy, chaos broke out among the two dozen or so women as they clamored to reach for one card of each type. The guard on duty had to move in to disperse the group, which had entirely gotten the better of me.

Afterward, back home, I wondered aloud what had happened. One of the brethren helped me with this reflection. "To the poor," he said—and who poorer than the incarcerated?—"every slightest possession is highly important." Thus he made sense of their eagerness—the eagerness that I have found, too, among inmates, Catholic or not, to have and wear multiple rosaries. I was getting a glimpse of the symbolic role of objects to us in our fleshly state. Along with what is strictly useful, we treasure what gives us some meaning or worth. It is part of human dignity to have things of one's own.

Nonetheless, I cannot help admitting, for myself, as someone pledged to an evangelical way of life, how large is my inventory. If the evangelist, by definition and as opposed to the settled minister, is one who travels light—like the Son of Man, with "no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58)—then I have probably lost the knack. Does Jesus Christ not recognize me as one of his mobile ones? A daunting

thought. Does he understand that I need all those books? A thought for the first world.

Thoreau's old cry of "Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!" is certainly hard to honor in the land of plenty. When missionaries return to the United States from abroad, they are overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of available stock. One of them, back on a breather after years with Salvadoran refugees, remarked upon American advertising and all-purpose stores: "What an immense amount of stuff they can get people to want!" True. A local high-school teacher added the following: "Young people growing up are used to so much. How hard for them to be unselfish."

*De te fabula, I tell myself. Don't worry so much about teenagers; the lesson's for you.*



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## Adults Suffer Trying to Please Parents

**M**any adults experience chronic feelings of frustration because of their belief that no matter what they accomplish, they will never fulfill the high expectations of their parents. They are convinced that no matter how hard they try, they will never succeed in eliciting from their parents the praise and approval they intensely and profoundly crave. Dr. Teresa Peck, a psychologist at the Center for the Family in Transition, in Corte Madera, California, has found that the adults who feel most distressed for this reason are the ones who, by more objective standards, should worry about it the least. She notes, "These people tend to be high achievers and overachievers. All their achievements are tinged with anxieties. They don't have a sense of satisfaction or joy in what they've accomplished."

As psychologist Lawrence Kutner explains in the *New York Times*, "Adult children who believe that what they do is never good enough were often compared unfavorably with a sibling when they were much younger. They may carry that sense of failure with

them through adulthood." He observes, "Their frustration over what they see as repeated rejection makes them feel angry at their parents and, at the same time, guilty over that anger."

Dr. Nancy K. Schlossberg, a professor of counseling at the University of Maryland, comments that "it is difficult for parents to relinquish the control and authority over their adult children that they had when the children were younger." But, she adds, "We may hear our parents as being critical and controlling, while our parents see the same behaviors as being 'involved.'" Schlossberg also recognizes that "it's hard for a grownup to hear a negative statement from a parent and take it in the same way as a negative statement from anyone else."

Dr. Peck often sees parents of frustrated adults "also confused and upset since they do not understand why their children bristle when they offer well-intentioned advice or comments."

# Transformative Christian Leadership

Michael R. Carey, Ed.D.

**T**he gospel stories paint a consistent picture of how Jesus interacted with people, and this picture tells us a great deal about Christian leadership. The gospels portray a leader who is charismatic, intellectually stimulating, and concerned with the individual as much as with the group. Beyond this, the gospels convey the message that the messiah's method of making the Kingdom of God present is to transform his followers into leaders who themselves serve as agents of moral growth and development for others. The symbol of leaven used in Jesus' parables typifies his leadership, which does not end in one leader-follower interaction but continues to spread, building a community of Christ-like leaders—a Kingdom of God.

Often we neglect to consider the transformative nature of Christ's leadership when we develop models of practical leadership, whether for secular or religious organizations. Christ is perfect, we argue to ourselves and others, and we're no saints; in fact, saints are viewed as notoriously bad managers of people, and we know that even in the Kingdom, things have got to get done.

What Jesus did, we can do too. What Christ does, working in us through faith, is transform us in order that we may transform others. As leaders in the church, in ministerial organizations, and even in our own families, we miss the whole point if we think that we cannot lead as Christ leads and still make things work. In fact, we make a serious mistake if we choose to fragment what is essentially integrated: that is, the way we experience

Christ in our lives and the way others experience us as leaders in their lives.

The purpose of this article is to examine the transformative nature of Christ-inspired leadership and urge its application to the reality of the church and ministerial organizations today. The qualities of transforming leadership will be examined from the perspective of the general leadership literature, then reexamined in the light of the Christian experience of God active in the world, and finally applied to the practical, day-to-day affairs of ministerial leadership.

## THREE BASIC STYLES

We cannot live among others and avoid leadership for very long. Whether with our families, at a church meeting, or at work among a group of colleagues, we are constantly interacting with other people who often (if not always) have different ideas about how things should happen yet who also look to us for advice or direction.

Assuming leadership is inevitable, but our choice of how we will act as leaders is not. Within each leader-follower interaction, we make choices regarding how we will deal with others, how we will work with them toward some common goal, and how we will make decisions. These many individual choices flow out of, and reflect, one of three fundamental leadership styles: transactional, transforming, and conforming.

I use the terms *transactional* and *transforming* as

they were originally used by political theorist James MacGregor Burns to describe how leaders interact with followers. *Conforming leadership*, my own term, identifies a dichotomous opposite to transforming leadership. In order to understand what is meant by transforming and conforming leadership, it is necessary to first understand how concepts of transactional and transforming leadership are used by leadership theorists today.

Burns viewed transactional leadership as a process that facilitates organizational or group activity through an exchange of commodities (e.g., wages, benefits, positive feedback) but does not affect either leaders or followers at the level of value and meaning. A leader who is transactional, therefore, is a kind of bureaucrat who achieves external organizational goals by the manipulation of followers through "payoffs." This type of leadership may (or may not) keep vocalized dissent to a minimum, but it does not alter attitudes or, more importantly, values or meaning. The goal of the transactional leader is to obtain the followers' behavioral compliance without the involvement of their attitudes or values.

Transactional leadership is opted for by the majority of individuals in business and political institutions and, alas, in religious organizations as well. At best, however, transactional leaders subscribe to a kind of ethical relativism regarding values and look to the attainment of organizational goals through the management of individual goals. At worst, transactional leaders view followers as uninterested in the work or decision-making process; this view obliges these leaders to manipulate their followers in order to attain organizational goals. Transactional leadership is certainly not the leadership of Christ, nor should it be that of Christian leaders.

In creating a definition of transforming leadership, Burns integrates Abraham Maslow's theories on human needs and Lawrence Kohlberg's theories on moral development and produces the concept of moral leadership, which he views as going beyond simply satisfying the followers' wants or desires, to being instrumental in producing the social change that will satisfy both the followers' and leader's authentic needs.

At its most elementary stage, transforming leadership describes an interaction in which leader and followers engage each other to share individual perceptions and values in order to work out a common sense of the "good." As the leader moves to higher levels of the transforming leadership process, more and more emphasis is placed upon values such as justice and equality, which exist beyond the consensus of the group. Leader and followers together pursue an understanding of, and action based on, a sense of the transcendent.

This aspect of transforming leadership is like the leaven of Christian leadership, for transforming

leadership empowers both leader and follower to engage each other in solving problems in ways that emphasize end values rather than individual, subjective interests. Followers are transformed into leaders who become agents of transformation for others. If behavioral change is the focus of transactional leadership, moral change is the locus of transforming leadership. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is not so much opposed to the transformation of followers into leaders as it is unconcerned with it.

Burns limits his analysis of leadership to the transactional and transforming types, but a third distinct option for leadership can also be described. Interestingly, the peculiar danger of this third option, here labeled conforming, is that it is very similar to transforming leadership in form, although diametrically different in substance. To understand this paradox of form and substance, it is necessary to understand the descriptors of transforming leadership, as developed by Bernard Bass, a business-management theorist.

## LEADER'S TRANSFORMING TRAITS

Using Burns's ideas to develop his own understanding of leadership, Bass identified three main descriptors, or characteristics, of the transformational leader: charisma, consideration, and intellectual strength.

Bass cites studies that indicate that charismatic leaders are able to shift people away from their petty preoccupations, can present themselves as people who can succeed where others fail, and can publicly articulate their followers' private feelings. Beyond just possessing charismatic personalities, transformational leaders also have consideration for their followers, which means that they enhance their self-esteem and desire for achievement and fulfill their special needs, thus facilitating the transformational process. In addition to charisma and consideration, transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to change followers' perceptions, ideas, and beliefs and to strengthen their use of imagination and creativity in problem solving. Intellectual stimulation facilitates the followers' rethinking of situations with new insight.

Both transforming and conforming leadership can be seen as proceeding from the similar characteristics of a transformational leader. Assuming that charisma, consideration, and intellectual stimulation are key to the process of change in followers, transforming leadership and conforming leadership are two very different approaches to the interaction between leader and followers in terms of the effect of the leadership process on both leader and followers.

Transforming leadership is viewed as instrumental to followers' achievement of authentic needs. It allows leader and followers to engage each other in

# The concept of transforming leadership can be used to define how Christ's transforming love works in the lives of his followers

a collaborative process of decision making and action. The nature of transforming leadership is instrumental in facilitating collaborative leader-follower interaction, and this allows genuine moral leadership to exist. Without genuine collaboration, leadership ceases to be transforming and moral and becomes conforming or ideological in nature. Change does take place as a result of both transforming leadership and conforming leadership; in the former it is directed toward end values that are authentic and, in that sense, transcendent, whereas in the latter it is directed toward self-created or previously constructed values that are subjective and partial and, therefore, ideological.

The concept of transforming leadership as described above can also be used to define how Christ's transforming love works in the lives of his followers. Just as in his ministerial work, as described in the gospels, Christ never forces or demands an ideological commitment from us, nor is he satisfied with behavioral compliance. Human freedom is always validated by the encounter with Christ, paradoxically more so when the human will is freely given over to the divine will. The transforming love of Christ in us makes us one with Christ in his mission of salvation; it transforms us into transforming leaders ourselves.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola compares the transforming work of Christ with the conforming strategy of Satan, which entraps people through a desire for possessions, power, and pride. Those so entrapped do not find that they become motivated by "bad" things; on the contrary, whatever they think is the truth is the truth, whatever they want is the good.

Ironically, the strategy of Christ and the strategy of Satan, as outlined by Ignatius, both assume a

charismatic, intellectually stimulating, and individually considerate leader. Therefore, those qualities in and of themselves are not sufficient to ensure good leadership, and certainly not sufficient to ensure Christian leadership. The end clarifies the means; the fundamental option of leadership changes everything.

## LEADERSHIP IN MINISTRY

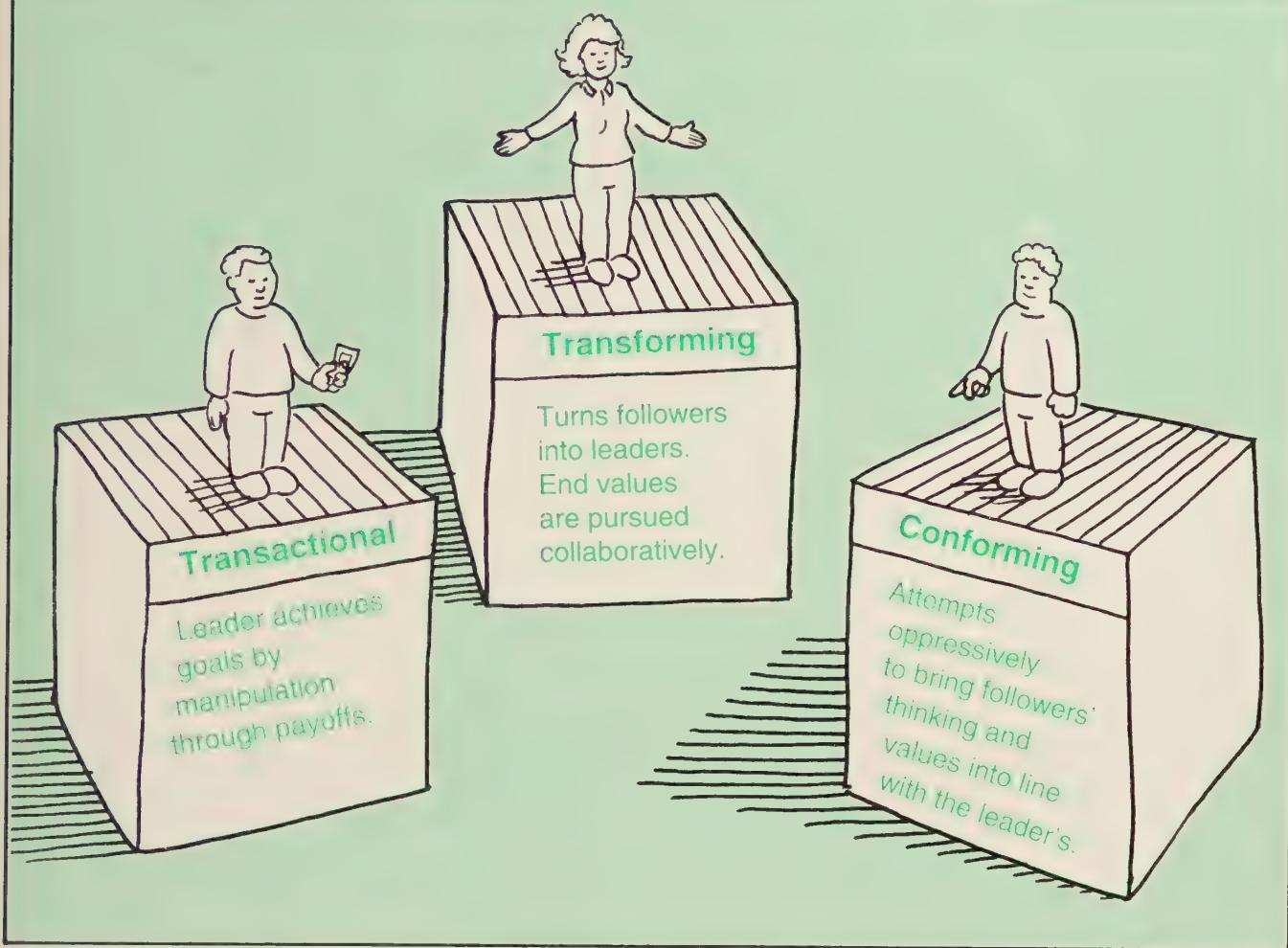
All too often, groups of Christians working together—whether priests in a diocesan meeting, lay parishioners working with a pastor, religious community members with a canonical superior, or teachers with a Catholic-school principal—have gone away from encounters with leaders with feelings of anger, resentment, or even worse, apathy. These bitter feelings often stem from having entered into a process that should be an experience of Christ's presence in the midst of the faith community—what I term an experience of transforming leadership—only to experience, at best, nothing (transactional leadership), or at worst, oppression (conforming leadership). Ironically, the bishops, pastors, superiors, principals, and others have no sense of being conforming leaders; in fact, if such leaders have any qualities that identify them as charismatic, intellectual, and/or considerate, they more often than not consider themselves transforming.

This phenomenon underscores the insidious nature of the blurring of distinctions between transforming and conforming leadership. The leader may indeed experience change taking place in the follower and may assume that such change is an indication of effective leadership. Yet if the change is either behavioral (transactional) or ideological (conforming), the leader may actually be blocking the work of God's grace while convincing himself or herself that he or she is doing God's will.

Earlier it was noted that in determining the difference between transforming Christian leadership and conforming ideological leadership, the leader's purpose in working with others is the guiding factor. The leader, therefore, must first be centered in the decision to be transforming, and must then set about structuring interactions with followers so that both the leader and the followers will be transformed by the interaction. If the fundamental option is for transforming leadership, then the structure of the leader-follower interaction must necessarily be collaborative in nature.

In her recent book *Collaborating*, Barbara Gray outlined four types of leader-follower interactions: collaboration, pluralism, elitism, and control of consciousness. She stated that central to the notion of collaboration is the concept of shared power: stakeholders in a collaboration essentially share the power to define a problem and initiate action to solve it. Gray contrasted this with pluralism (di-

# BASIC STYLES OF LEADERSHIP



verse groups, representing a variety of different interests, clashing with one another); elitism (one party or a select group controlling access to the decision-making forum); and control of consciousness (powerful groups acquiescing to decisions that are contrary to their interests, because they subscribe to overarching myths that make those decisions appear legitimate).

Returning to the example of Jesus in the gospel stories and to our own experience of Christ active in our lives, we discern that Christian, transforming leadership is never an exercise in control of consciousness or elitism. Nor is it a case of pluralism; a democratic process that processes the conflicts arising from the different needs and values of many individuals does not necessarily guarantee the working of the Spirit. Christian leadership is transforming, and transforming leadership empowers both leader and followers to raise each other to higher

levels of motivation based not on subjective interests but on the transcendent will of God.

## LEADER AS INSTRUMENT

It is important to understand that transforming Christian leadership does not imply passivity on the part of the leader. In discussing how counselors or other helpers work with people to assist in their personal growth and development, Maslow wrote of the importance of the Taoist concept of *wu wei* ("let-be"). If a helper rejects oppressive control of others, this does not mean that the helper is to be passive in working with others. In *Toward a Psychology of Being* Maslow says that the attitude of the helper is

formulated as "helpful let-be." It is a loving and respecting Taoism. It recognizes not only growth and

the specific mechanism which makes it move in the right direction, but it also recognizes and respects the fear of growth, the slow pace of growth, the blocks, the pathology, the reasons for not growing. It recognizes the place, the necessity and the helpfulness of the outer environment without yet giving it control. It implements inner growth by knowing its mechanisms and by being willing to help it instead of merely being hopeful or passively optimistic about it. (p. 55)

Certainly, Jesus did not control, nor was he passive. Jesus was first and foremost an instrument, and in that sense he both allowed things to happen and caused them to happen. Every event in his public life, including his death and resurrection, was an example of this. When we allow ourselves to become transformed by God through the working of Jesus in our lives, our experience is also one of instrumentality, in the sense of Jesus' integration of suffering and action.

In applying this to the day-to-day realities of leadership in our contemporary world, it is helpful to realize that Jesus' instrumentality influenced one of the greatest transforming leaders of our century, Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi wrote of *satyagraha*, or holding firmly onto the truth, which paradoxically means that the individual must be unceasingly open to those who differ with him or her, for no one can be sure of possessing all truth at all times. This respect for others, however, led Gandhi not to passive inaction but to nonviolent action.

The Christian leader must bring to every encounter a fundamental option for transformation. He or she must always be open to change, whether insti-

tutional or personal. The leader must bring prayerful discernment to every interaction and every decision, seeing situations and people as they are, not as the leader thinks they should be. The leader must act, must engage his or her followers and move them to become transformed into leaders. Finally, the leader must let go, "let-be," and allow followers to collaborate fully with others.

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# *Inventing a Group's Future*

*M. Canice Johnson, R.S.M., Ph.D.*

**T**

he voice on the telephone said, "We need to look at our future. Can you help us do it?"

In the work of Community Creativity, Inc., with communities and organizations over the past several years, this is one of the requests that our consultants have heard most often. What is behind this request? Oftentimes, persons within a group realize that their future needs will be different from those of the past, that things that have worked fairly well over the years do not work well now, or that many of the most serious needs in church and society are not addressed by present structures. Frequently, they know that the changes they seek are major and are bound up with so many structures, attitudes, or practices that a traditional planning process will not effect them.

The kind of process that is needed flows from seeing the future as Harvey Cox did when he said that it is "an open field of human hope and responsibility." Three attitudes for engaging in a futuring process are suggested by his definition. First, the group must begin with hope, with a conviction that positive change for the future is possible. Second, future-change agents need a sense of responsibility, a belief that human persons, with God, are co-creators of the future. They can and must effect future change. Finally, the future must be seen as an open field.

Unfortunately, these three attitudes are not easily come by. Many people do not perceive the future as an open field. Awareness of financial burdens, aging personnel, ill-adapted structures, and reluctance to change may inhibit even the thought of exploring the group's desires for a future that is more life-giving than the present reality. The members of the group therefore have little hope in their

ability and forfeit their responsibility to effect needed change.

I believe there are two reasons we find it hard to get past the locked doors of our minds and into the open field of possible future alternatives. The first reason is a prevailing mechanistic worldview, and the second is insufficiently developed competence in processes using creative imagination.

## **A REDUCTIONIST WORLDVIEW**

Our worldview affects our assumptions about how the stuff of future reality is related to the stuff of present reality. Many people today, like the "conspirators" of Marilyn Ferguson's *Aquarian Conspiracy*, believe that an overwhelming block to the kind of radical change needed in every aspect of our social, political, economic, and religious lives today is the prevailing Western worldview—a mechanistic worldview that sees the world as an enormous machine made up of discrete parts. Understanding of this world, it is assumed, lies in reducing each thing to its component parts until one arrives at the smallest bits of matter.

A mechanistic approach to the science of medicine perceives human illness as a breakdown of some physical part of the body and gives little thought to the patient's life purpose, psychological stress, relationships, and, least of all, spirituality. A mechanistic approach to economics analyzes the economy in isolation, with deep-seated racist, sexist, and nationalist biases. A mechanistic mind-set led to the "solution" of the serious problem of the lack of a homeland for Jews in a way that displaced Palestinian Arabs from their homeland. This in turn has led to years of strife that may never end,

# We have learned to over-rely on that part of the brain which specializes in interpreting data in terms of existing patterns

unless there is found a new pattern of response, not to the needs of one people or the other but to the needs of both. Once this new formula is found, it will probably seem so simple that everyone will wonder why no one had thought of it before.

To bring the concept of a mechanistic approach closer to home: A member of a religious community, a parish staff member, or the chief executive officer of a hospital, living out of the prevailing mechanistic worldview, could say, "Sure, there are other needs in the world, but the only concern I have time for is the one I meet everyday in my ministry. Someone else will have to be concerned about the other parts." It is as though God is the Great Foreman and has parceled out tasks along the assembly line of life.

Worldview affects not only what we choose to consider regarding the future but also how we consider it. One religious community owns several small houses for its members, but few of the members choose to live in them. The community can address the problem by selling some of the houses or by assigning Sisters to live in them. But if life-style, supportive relationships within community, communal prayer style, and relationship between community and ministry are among the sources of the housing problem, this simplistic approach will not work.

## WORLDVIEW IN TRANSITION

Today our worldview is shifting, and interestingly, the discoveries of modern physicists are a major impetus for the shift. Physicist Fritjof Capra says we are now experiencing a "crisis of perception." Our worldview, he says, is at a turning point, changing from mechanistic to organic. Physicists in the early part of this century, in studying the atom, found that reductionist theories did not ad-

equately explain reality. Instead, at its basis, all matter, all reality, has been found to be a web of relationships that fail to obey many of the laws of traditional physics. Scientists are finding themselves using language remarkably close to that of Eastern philosophy and Christian mysticism in attempting to understand and explain newly discovered phenomena such as the oneness or interconnectedness of all that is.

Applying a mechanistic worldview to our assembly-line model of God's plan for the world, we might think that problems in the church and the world today result from vacancies in posts along the assembly line. God and the church have big personnel problems—and one mechanistic solution is priestless liturgies.

An organic model reveals underlying issues and relationships among issues. Without the assumption that the parish is the basic unit of Catholic ecclesial life, what might we envision? Without the assumption that living community is identical with living *in* a community, what expressions of community relationship might emerge? Without the assumption that health care is best provided through a system of acute care institutions, what approaches might be generated that would be more universally health-effecting as well as cost-effective?

We are called to envision all of creation—all people and all of the material and spiritual world—as interrelated. Each of us, although situated in a particular place and time and limited in what we can personally accomplish, is united with and participates in the whole organic birthing process.

## PROCESSES OF IMAGINATION

There is a second reason that it is difficult to see the future as an open field of human hope and responsibility rather than a set of fixed structures and events that can be tinkered with or shuffled around but not radically changed. The mechanistic, reductionist worldview has had its effects not only on our scientific beliefs and our decisions regarding social or ecclesial problems but even on the processes we use to arrive at truth and make decisions.

What Western society has most valued in the past few centuries has been logical, linear, analytic thinking, because it was this kind of thinking that was most needed in applying the scientific method assumed by the mechanistic worldview. When problem solving was valued at all, education emphasized the logical, linear, and analytic. Some people have also developed the creative, intuitive, synthesizing capabilities of their persons, becoming poets, artists, and prophets—often not because of but in spite of their formal education.

We have learned to over-rely on that part of the brain which specializes in interpreting data in

terms of existing patterns. At the same time, we have learned to distrust the part that specializes in wisdom—in large patterns that unite us with all nature, all history, and the deepest hopes of humankind for the future. As a result, the wonderfully developed logical faculties of the left brain are deprived of the very stuff with which they do their best work. Before we can organize and articulate new possibilities, we need the intuitive part of the brain to provide us with new patterns for new or old information and experience. The kaleidoscope can be a wonderful image for this: what glorious new patterns emerge from what appears to be a random reordering of the stuff of experience.

It is possible to break away from what Elise Boulding calls the “stale strategies” of our unimaginative thinking. Intuition is key. Marilyn Ferguson says that intuition encompasses intellect; it knows everything that we know in our thinking state of consciousness and a great deal more. We get stuck in living out old patterns because we do not trust the emergence of new data or information coming from our unconscious, or from the “center” where our own spirit and the Holy Spirit are in communion.

Among the processes for fostering intuitive competence is imaging of the future. Ferguson says that whatever lowers the mental barrier and lets unclaimed material emerge into our consciousness is transformative. Recognition—literally, “knowing again”—happens when the analytical half of the brain, with its power to name and classify, admits the wisdom of the other half into full awareness. Since the organizing part of the brain can only understand what it can fit into prior knowledge, intuitive processes such as imaging allow the right side of the brain to generate new patterns of desirable futures, which the left side then organizes and articulates. Imaging is transformative because it opens our ordinary consciousness to receiving the gifts of the other parts of ourselves that we do not always allow to break through.

Imaging is the perception of interior sights, feelings, smells, sounds, physical or psychic movements, or symbols. Broadly considered, imaging includes all intuitive movements of the mind, those that draw on all the nonrational strengths of the mind. Imaging can spontaneously—that is, in a nonlinear way—yield new patterns of insight, new meanings, new ways of integrating new and old concepts to spark new resourcefulness in us.

We cannot command ourselves to experience a spontaneous emergence of images. But numerous methodologies are making imaging and other competencies of the right hemisphere of the brain more available to us. Unlike thinking, imaging is “allowed,” not “worked at.” Ferguson says it is “more like ‘tuning in’ than traveling from point to point.” The imager lets go of conscious control in order that new images may emerge. It is no wonder that

the poets of old personified the Muse as the spirit who gifted them with creativity. The source of their creativity was so real, and yet so different from their ordinary conscious self, that they personified it as “other.” We all have our Muses, many of them silent because they have for so long been ignored or distrusted. But we have only to begin to be attentive and expectant, and the silent voices of the wisdom figures within us will speak.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS ABOUND

More and more psychologists, retreat directors, and medical professionals are suggesting methods of visualizing or imaging for personal growth, spiritual growth, and healing. We are becoming more comfortable with centering prayer and Eastern approaches to meditation. Ignatius of Loyola, particularly in the “applications of the senses” mode of his Spiritual Exercises, used his imagination to recreate the scenes of the gospels and, at times, imagined himself to be in those scenes. Although he would not have used this language, Ignatius was describing a movement into a nonrational state of consciousness in which his own spirit, united with the Spirit of God, could communicate inspiration and new patterns of meaning to him.

Scientists studying biofeedback are proving that we can have much more control over body and brain processes than we once thought possible. Psychologist Jean Houston tells us to talk to the brain: for instance, we can tell it to shift from the normal alert state of consciousness, our thinking state, to the slower, larger-amplitude rhythms associated with relaxed states, meditation, and serenity. We can tell the body to let go of muscle tightness and the brain to let go of the fears that cause us to cling to narrow perceptions and block new ideas for possible futures.

Psychologist Eugene Gendlin proposes a process he calls, simply, “focusing.” Focusing is a way of coming into awareness of the body’s sense of a particular problem or situation, which Gendlin calls a “felt sense.” He encourages people to sit quietly, attending to what the body knows that is not yet known to the consciousness in relation to a particular problem or task. Typically, a word or impression bubbles up, often fuzzy in meaning at first, but when it fits the quality of the problem or creative task, one experiences recognition, the felt sense. When one is able to stay with this felt sense and the word or image one recognizes as naming it, Gendlin says, the felt sense “shifts” in a way that is experienced as a kind of physical relief, a letting go or opening. This process often leads to significant personal change.

The surest sign of the discernment of God’s will is a deep inner peace. What is this if not an experience of one’s inner rhythms being in harmony, in pattern with the larger rhythms of the whole of God’s

# PRACTICAL USES OF IMAGING



creation? It is the faith experience of Gendlin's felt sense. Warren Zeigler speaks of "true images" and "false images" of the future, a distinction that I initially found hard to grasp. It seemed to me that an image is an image is an image. If I image it, how can it be a false image? Later, however, as I facilitated imaging processes with groups, I came to understand that not all images are reflections of the grand image of all that is (i.e., "true" images). True images come from the depth of one's spirit united with God's Spirit. Jean Houston calls them "codings of the human psyche."

In contrast with this, false images move against nature: a butterfly trying to reenter its cocoon; an arsenal of nuclear weapons presenting itself as a keeper of peace; oppression of peoples as an appropriate condition; a pastor of a parish who is responsive to nothing more than his parishioners' sacramental needs; a religious community in which questioning of authority is perceived as a violation of obedience.

## IMAGING HELPS PLANNING

Imaging offers a powerful means for personal and spiritual growth. But imaging approaches are

also very useful for community and organizational planning. In our facilitation of futuring processes, we have often found that groups collectively experience something like Gendlin's "felt sense" when they have been able to name the images that energize them to find a new direction for mission. Oftentimes the words themselves are not that strikingly unusual, but the group experiences them as different, as somehow expressing or symbolizing a powerful sense of direction and intention for effecting positive future change.

A process must always flow out of the needs of the group. It can be very helpful to use imaging to stimulate creativity for developing a mission statement, writing goals and objectives, or planning strategic action. Brainstorming to come up with possible future images can help a group break through a sense of being unable to think of any new possibilities. A traditional planning process, spiced with or solidly integrated with right-brain methodologies, can be very powerful for groups in many situations.

I believe, however, that a qualitatively greater leap into futures imaging will be necessary, at least for some groups, in order for us to effect the kinds of change that society and church cry out for at this

time in history. I am suggesting a process that begins with, rests upon, and is willing to measure its resultant action against the preferred future images it names.

Some groups exhibit a readiness for this fuller futuring process, which sets out to name a future image that the group will identify as worth giving their lives for. They are committed to the time and the energy it takes to sift through the grand diversity of individual dreams for the future—however the group chooses to focus the future reflection—to arrive at a consensus regarding an image or images that they can enthusiastically commit themselves to actualizing.

With such groups we have designed and facilitated processes based on the three components of Warren Zeigler's process of "futures invention": imaging, intentioning, and action planning. The first part calls for exercises in imaging, to help the individuals and then the group, acting together as a discerning community with a common mission, to discover the participants' preferred images for the group's future, or to allow these images to bubble up.

The second component consists of exercises in intentioning—that is, discerning whether the images are true images, images that resonate with the group's sense of mission, its whole purpose for being. The third part is action planning, in which the group lays out the practical first steps for moving toward its preferred future, as named in the images. Typically, the power experienced in the now "intentioned" images assists the group at this stage to move beyond stale strategies and also gives it the energy to implement its plans.

One religious community imaged itself as more involved in ministry among the economically poor. Within the years following the group's futuring process, increasing ownership of the communal commitment was apparent in ongoing reflective processes, decisions regarding community resources, concerns regarding sponsored works, and choices for ministry made by many individual members of the community.

The staff of a very large parish that had numerous activities and committees envisioned the parish staff and council organized and communicating in a way that would give everyone a sense of connectedness with the larger mission of the parish and the church. This led to a two-year process of ongoing review and decision, involving both council and staff, regarding their structures and ways of working together. The processes enabled many in the parish to become more effectively involved and committed.

The board of directors of a health care system envisioned health care provision that would approach other providers collaboratively rather than competitively. In the three years since their imaging this preferred future, they have initiated several collaborative ventures, regarding which they

get mixed responses from potential partners. When others identify with the value of partnering in terms of improved response to the health needs of civic communities, truly new models of collaborative venture can occur.

Futuring processes in several religious congregations have enabled their members to name their dreams for many different aspects of their lives. Working in issue groups delineated by the relatedness of individuals' future images, they have developed and refined future scenarios, which all the groups then consider in an effort to choose future directions. One such congregation, which engaged in a futuring process as part of its congregational chapter five years ago, has found that besides bringing the members to action on specific choices regarding their desired future, the process has enabled them to listen to one another in new ways and to develop competence in futuring skills that have extended to other areas of their personal and corporate decision making.

## HOPE IN CREATIVITY

We are living in an exciting time. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear are experiencing a worldview transition from mechanistic to organic. They are becoming more respectful of the gift of human imagination and more skilled at using it. They are willing to risk introducing more spontaneous, creative processes into their organizational and community planning. In a world that has suffered deeply from a deficiency of human imagination, I find great hope in this.

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# *Spiritual Direction in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*

*Dominic Maruca, S.J.*

**A**s we enter the last decade of our millenium, it is clear that the church in which we live has become multicultural. There is throughout the world a growing awareness of the cultural pluralism of humanity. Long before the term *inculturation* was coined by cultural anthropologists, missionaries had been adapting themselves to the local cultural settings in which they found themselves and appropriating elements that did not compromise the church's basic faith in Christ. But in the wake of Vatican II's teaching, theologians have been stressing that the new challenge we face is precisely that of meeting other cultures in a spirit of honest and humble dialogue as regional churches begin to criticize and enrich one another. We are being encouraged to reflect on the theological issues at stake and to devise a new pastoral approach adequate to the problems accompanying this new development.

The aim of this article is to consider how this new and growing challenge is affecting spiritual direction. More than ever in the past, directors are being invited abroad—not only to minister to seminarians from different regions but also to conduct workshops for priests and religious and to collaborate with a broad range of laypersons in a variety of ways. There is a similar flow in the opposite direction: more and more persons are crossing national and international boundaries, some voluntarily (e.g., to engage in studies), others displaced or forced to emigrate for political, eco-

nomic, or social reasons. They too are seeking spiritual directors who are sensitive to their distinctive cultural heritages. One religious formator described how he felt about his situation in these terms: "I am standing on a middle ground and looking two ways: toward the congregation that has missioned me to initiate new members into the order, and toward people of a different culture, whom I am missioned to serve."

## **DIALOGUE IS ESSENTIAL**

Clearly, we are at a critical point. We can take advantage of this new opportunity or allow it to be added to the distressing list of past failures. Ary Roest Croilius and Théoneste Nkéramihigo, authors of *What Is So New About Inculturation?* write, "The experiences of our history make us painfully aware of the fact that not all contact between different cultures means automatically an enrichment for the cultures concerned. Culture-contact can also be destructive. . . . Every one-directional process of cultural assimilation ignores the riches of originality and creativity in a given culture and leads to an impoverishment of human values. A fruitful communication between cultures has to take on the form of a dialogue. . . . Through dialogue one not only learns to understand the other, but acquires also a deeper understanding of oneself."

The question before us is this: Can we directors

prepare ourselves to meet this new opportunity by learning how to engage respectfully in dialogue with persons of various cultures? It is difficult to become conscious of something so elusive as the implicit suppositions underlying our manner of dealing with persons of different cultures. I must confess that I first became aware of my deficient mind-set only indirectly as I came to recognize that my style of engaging in dialogue was counterproductive. My capacity for listening attentively, resisting the urge to confront prematurely, and responding in a more tentative manner was not what it could and should have been. By reflecting on three basic principles that have been acknowledged as axiomatic in spiritual direction for many centuries, I discovered that I was failing to observe them, especially in cross-cultural situations. Underlying this failure were certain unacknowledged prejudices or presuppositions on my part. (Need I mention that a greater sensitivity to the demands of cross-cultural situations improved my mode of dealing with persons within my own culture?)

The three closely related principles that enabled me to acknowledge my latent biases were these: (1) Each person who comes to us for spiritual direction should be recognized and respected as unique. (2) But uniqueness does not mean self-sufficiency; each of us labors under the common human tendency to overlook our own defects and limitations; therefore, we all need supplementary instruction and correction. (3) The more sacred and sublime a truth is, the greater is the need to impart it gradually and to adapt it to each person's temperament and stage of development. Let us reflect on these principles at more leisure and in greater depth. Since a change in perspective is usually the prerequisite for achieving a more global vision, it may be that by becoming aware of the presuppositions with which many persons of diverse cultural backgrounds commonly approach one another, we will broaden our horizons and enhance our capacity to engage in dialogue with others.

### RESPECTING PERSON'S UNIQUENESS

Experienced directors are unanimous in teaching that one's own spiritual itinerary is not to be made normative for others. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, in her role as mistress of novices, noted that all souls have practically the same battles to wage but that each has to do so in its own way. She tells us that she became conscious of an obligation to forget her own tastes, her own personal conceptions, so that she could guide souls not along the road that she herself had traversed but along the particular path that Jesus was pointing out to them. She recognized that she had to refrain from trying to conduct all novices in the same way.

Similarly, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, in all his activity as a director of souls, maintained a delicate

balance: he appears above all as one faithful in transmitting the message he had received from God in the graces of his mystical life—namely, the message to promote a spirituality of service through love. But at the same time he was very independent of his own interior ways, careful to direct each soul according to the ways marked out by God for it, docile to the lessons of experience. He was penetrating and quick to discern, and then to bring to accomplishment at any cost, the chief desires of God with respect to each soul, taking into account all the differences by which each was distinguished.

Why this reverential respect for the uniqueness of each person? It is not simply to assure psychological effectiveness; there are more radical doctrinal and theological reasons. The doctrinal reason is that the freedom of God is reflected in its image—that is, in each person. This freedom is manifested, and must be respected continuously, by insisting on what is called the primacy of grace: its absolute gratuity and utterly personal character. As a corollary to this truth, we must recognize that there is simply no way in which any human director can specify in advance exactly which path God will choose to lead any given person to the holiness and perfection of love to which he or she is being called. Let us consider this concretely.

So much depends on an incalculable number of variables: hereditary factors and family background; religious training or lack thereof; traumas during childhood or adolescence; sinful patterns of behavior; experiences of moral, religious, and intellectual conversion; training in prayer and penance; experiences of love and affection or, conversely, of neglect, oppression, and injustice. The list could be extended indefinitely. To ignore the distinctiveness of each person seeking guidance and direction is to disregard the handiwork of the Creator, who knows and loves each creature infinitely more than any human director ever can. The first obligation of any director is to respect this truth and keep it ever in mind. His or her primary contribution is to direct the attention of each person to the Spirit of God, present and operative within each of us; to help that person recognize, appreciate, and embrace the movements of that Spirit. It is not to impose his or her views, values, or judgments on that person. This principle is recognized by spiritual masters as basic and absolutely inviolable.

As we shift our focus specifically to the cross-cultural level, we may ask ourselves, How well have we been observing this principle in our dealings as spiritual directors with persons from a cultural background totally or partially different from our own?

I learned, somewhat to my embarrassment, that I shared the natural preference people seem to have for their own nation and culture. C. S. Lewis relates

# Through awareness of the beauty and integrity of the other people's culture, we become more capable of directing them wisely

a humorous story to illustrate what he calls a firm, even prosaic, belief that one's own nation, in sober fact, has long been and still is markedly superior to all others: "I once ventured to say to an old clergyman who was voicing this sort of patriotism, 'But, sir, aren't we told that *every* people thinks its own men the bravest and its own women the fairest in the world?' He replied with total gravity—he could not have been graver if he had been saying the Creed at the altar—'Yes, but in England it's true.'" Lewis concludes with the observation, "To be sure, this conviction had not made my friend (God rest his soul) a villain; only an extremely lovable old ass. It can however produce asses that kick and bite."

What I had to admit was that at times I was making my cultural background and values normative for others. Proof? Honest dialogue had become impossible. Persons coming to me for spiritual direction had already benefited from a social, intellectual, and religious formation proper to their own culture. Certain values and patterns of behavior that had been transmitted to them enjoyed an integrity and beauty of their own. I came to recognize that my failure to acknowledge this truth by an attempt to impose a system of formation and direction totally alien to those inherited and acquired values and characteristics not only made any dialogue impossible but also constituted a gross injustice against my neighbor and irreverence toward our Creator. The most direct way to learn how I could be of service to any particular person was, of course, simply to listen. By listening, a director receives the material that constitutes the elements for direction; for example, what images the person has of God, of the world, of the person. One's particular understanding of the church and its mission to the world, of one's personal voca-

tion, of one's values and vision, also can come into sharp focus.

To sum up this first point: an expression of our respect and love for the people of any nation is our willingness to learn their language and literature, to grow in appreciation of their art forms and symbols, history, geography, and economic and political structures. With this awareness of the beauty and integrity of the other people's culture, we become better disposed to listening attentively to what they wish to tell us about themselves; consequently, we become more capable of directing them wisely. This is not to imply that spiritual directors must totally set aside all the experience they have derived from their own training and culture. The following discussion of the second spiritual axiom will demonstrate that we can draw on that experience and training most effectively and respectfully.

## RECIPROCITY IN CHALLENGING

This second principle is correlative to the first. I used to presume that persons coming for direction recognized that they had at best only a limited understanding of the ways in which God deals with humankind. I thought that they were coming with a willingness to be instructed, challenged, and corrected if necessary. After all, a distinctive characteristic of the Catholic tradition of spiritual direction is an eagerness to profit from the rich heritage of the experiential wisdom of the past and from the variety of peoples embodying the mystery of Christ today. Those who prefer to enclose themselves in private experience risk being cut off from the vast reservoir of past wisdom and from the fresh streams of contemporary developments.

In working in cross-cultural settings, I have learned to question those naive assumptions and to make my expectations more realistic. I now think that most persons who come for spiritual direction come with the common desire to be accepted and understood, with a hope that they will be loved for who they are, as they are. Many are easily intimidated by any confrontation that is ill-advised or premature. Gradually they will acknowledge that they are in need of guidance and correction. But silence and a smile may be the prelude to being welcomed into their hearts. Like the Lord himself, we must stand at the door, knock, and then wait patiently for the invitation to enter (Rev. 3:20).

This reverential restraint and reticence can become a source of tension if not properly understood. Spiritual directors are in a sense an embodiment of the tradition they represent and have a responsibility to present that tradition clearly and comprehensively. When and how to present our tradition calls for delicate discernment. By way of illustration, let us consider one area in which we are bound to make known our Christian tradition:

that of prayer. I submit that dialogue can promote both an enriched mutual understanding and protection from certain errors.

In its letter entitled "Some Aspects of Christian Meditation," dated October 15, 1989, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith provides us with authoritative teaching on Christian prayer. A number of passages in this letter strike me as potential topics for discussion and reflection for persons seeking spiritual direction. Although the substance of what is being taught is solidly grounded, the manner in which it is expressed may evoke questions in the minds of persons with other cultural backgrounds.

The occasion for the letter was the pastoral solicitude concerning the interest awakened in forms of meditation associated with some Eastern religions. The letter asks whether these different styles and methods can enrich our heritage and, if so, what criteria of a doctrinal and pastoral character might allow spiritual directors to instruct others in these new forms of prayer while remaining faithful to the truth revealed in Jesus. I interpret this as a mandate to engage in dialogue with those from other traditions. By way of introduction, the letter reminds us that any discussion on prayer must start with a certain premise: Christian prayer is always determined by the structure of our faith—namely, that God is God and creatures are creatures. Prayer, then, can be defined as "a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between a human person and God." This is an excellent starting point for dialogue.

The first section is a fine exposition of "Christian Prayer in the Light of Revelation." It highlights the Bible as the primary teacher of how to pray. Then it draws on the teaching of Vatican II to describe prayer as a dialogue between God and God's friends, which enables us to discover the deep meaning of sacred scripture, both in an ecclesial setting and in a personal manner. I think this is a solid introduction on the nature of Christian prayer for persons seeking direction.

The next section is entitled "Erroneous Ways of Praying." The letter draws upon the long history of the church, reaching back to the early centuries, to caution us against incorrect forms of prayer, which have reappeared throughout history. It singles out two fundamental deviations: (1) Pseudognosticism: the notion that matter is something impure and degraded, imprisoning the soul in an ignorance from which prayer must free it and raise it to a pure state of superior knowledge. Those who achieve such a spiritual state can dispense with Christian faith as something superfluous, proper only to simple believers. (2) Messalianism: By identifying the grace of the Holy Spirit with the psychological experience of his presence in the soul, this teaching denies that we are united to God always in a mysterious way (for example, by way of

the sacraments of the church). Moreover, this teaching fails to recognize that union with God can be achieved through experiences of affliction and desolation, not just during times of euphoric emotion. The letter cautions us, moreover, against any effort to overcome the distance that will always separate creature from Creator, as though there ought not to be such a distance; it teaches that we must beware of considering the way Christ walked on earth, and by which he wishes to lead us to the Father, as a way that has been surpassed; it wants to guard us against bringing down to the level of natural psychology what has been regarded as pure grace. These errors have reappeared in history and continue to be appealing "quick ways" of finding God. They tend to disregard the human-earthly dimension of life. I found that much in this section has served as the basis of honest dialogue. Also, in the subsequent sections on "The Christian Way to Union with God," "Questions of Method," "Psychological-Corporal Methods," and "I Am the Way," there is much material for discussion.

It seems that two balancing dispositions are desirable in dialoguing about prayer: a deep conviction of the value of our own spiritual tradition, so that we can present it courageously, and an awareness of its possible limitations, to assure respect for other approaches. For example, at one time I presumed that our abstract manner of conceiving and expressing a reality is superior to that of more "primitive" peoples. Martin Buber made me aware of this mind-set with a striking question: Should distance be expressed in terms of a measurable quantity or in terms of relationships? We Westerners say "far away" to describe distance; the Zulu has a sentence-word instead that means "where one cries 'Mother, I am lost.'" By what criteria do we presume that the abstract mode of speaking is superior to the concrete world of human relationships? Is the concrete and particular necessarily more "primitive" than the abstract and universal, especially in the area of prayerful union with God?

## GRADUAL PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES

The third and final principle for our consideration is that of how we are to present the truths of our faith. Certain formal spiritual and moral principles are considered to be generally, if not universally, valid: for example, the need for self-denial as a condition for following Christ; a detachment from material things; purity of mind and heart; universal love, especially of one's enemies. Concern to impart these principles in all their integrity can lead us to strive for a premature clarity to the detriment of human relationships, to exercise a brutal honesty at the expense of Christlike compassion. I have found that this matter calls for delicate prayerful discernment and consultation with oth-

# Christianity is not like the formula for Coca-Cola, which can be exported to diverse lands, mixed with local water, and distributed for native consumption

ers more knowledgeable about a given culture. How are certain principles to be held firmly while being adapted to the pace of growth and development of the persons we seek to evangelize?

John Henry Cardinal Newman helped me on this point. He noted that in the early church, a principle of "economy" was observed in preaching, in instructing, and in catechizing with respect to the divine ordinances and the duties of Christians:

As Almighty God did not all at once introduce the Gospel to the world, and thereby gradually prepared men for its profitable reception, so, according to the doctrine of the early Church, it was a duty, for the sake of the heathen among whom they lived, to observe a great reserve and caution in communicating to them the knowledge of "the whole counsel of God." This cautious dispensation of the truth, after the manner of a discreet and vigilant steward, is denoted by the word "Economy." It is a mode of acting which comes under the head of Prudence, one of the four Cardinal Virtues. The Principle of the Economy is this; that out of various courses, in religious conduct or statement, all and each *allowable antecedently and in themselves*, that ought to be taken which is most expedient and most suitable at the time for the object in hand.

He goes on to give examples of its application and exercise in scripture, where we see that Divine Providence did but gradually impart to the world in general, and to the Jews in particular, the knowledge of God's will. Newman concludes that this rule is to be applied in dealings between peoples of different religious, political, or social views.

Spiritual masters have practiced and recommended this same principle in the spiritual direction of anyone who wishes to scale the heights of Christian perfection. The pace at which persons advance is not a fixed one, nor do they proceed in lock-step formation. God's grace cannot be programmed mechanically. The measure and intensity

of God's gifts depend on many factors: the nature and generosity of each person, mental or spiritual capacity, age, physical strength, degree of education, moral and spiritual dispositions, good will and earnest desires, the special purpose for which he or she seeks spiritual direction, acceptance of the evangelical counsels. Premature exposition of spiritual ideals, indiscriminate exhortations to diligence and zeal, or excessive warnings and admonitions about problems and dangers can lead to debilitating anxiety, frustration, and discouragement. Patience and prudence are therefore absolutely necessary.

What is prescribed on the individual level, I submit, is even more crucial on the cross-cultural level. The cultural anthropologists Crollius and Nkéramihigo warn us that "the split in the contemporary post-colonial conscience between Christianity and Western civilization nurtures the dreadful illusion that it is possible to isolate Christianity in its essence" by divesting it of the foreign elements borrowed from Western culture. At the risk of appearing facetious, I would express this misperception by observing that Christianity is not like the formula for Coca-Cola, which can be exported to diverse lands, mixed with local water, and distributed for native consumption. Discretion is called for as we seek to share the wisdom of the ages with persons being evangelized and guided to the fullness of perfect love. In a far-ranging, perceptive essay entitled "The Church, Society and Politics" (in *The Reshaping of Catholicism*), Avery Dulles reminds us that each culture has a distinctive attitude toward life and death, wealth and poverty, power and weakness, truth and falsehood, pleasure and pain. In formulating specific policies, the movement from principle to practice is complex and delicate. In a similar manner, it seems to me, the spiritual director has a formidable challenge in moving from spiritual principles to practice. Our capacity to speak a healing and transforming word to those who come to us will depend on our sensitivity as well as our honesty and courage. This is a question not of whether we will compromise our principles but of whether we will exercise flexibility and discretion in applying them.

## DIRECTION EXPRESSES LOVE

Spiritual direction can be viewed as an exercise in the asceticism of truth and love demanded by the very nature of genuine dialogue. To listen attentively to other persons, respecting their uniqueness and not imposing our own agenda; to challenge and confront others patiently and progressively, without frightening them or fearing their disapproval; to proceed gradually in communicating truths founded unshakably on our faith—these are all expressions of love for our neighbor and reverence for the truth. Such honest, humble

dialogue demands faith and freedom on the part of everyone engaging therein.

Any attitude that impedes or precludes the possibility of dialogue with persons who come to us for spiritual direction diminishes our effectiveness as spiritual directors. This is true in every situation, but especially in a cross-cultural setting. We have reflected on three such impeding attitudes or predispositions: (1) any feeling, conscious or unconscious, of ethnocentric superiority that prevents us from respecting the uniqueness of each person who comes to us; (2) a failure to recognize the need to confront and challenge others with the utmost caution and humility, as well as with courage and honesty; (3) an unwillingness to wait patiently for divine grace to prepare and dispose each person for the full truth of our Christian faith.

I find an excellent model to follow in our risen Lord's manner of dealing with the two disciples walking along the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35). They were disillusioned and dejected; their hearts were downcast because their hopes had been shattered. Jesus emerged from the shadows and fell into step with them. The Divine Physician lanced, as it were, the festering wound of their depression and let it drain through self-expression; he simply asked a question and listened attentively. After this attentive hearing he confronted them firmly but gently, berating them for their lack of faith in God's full message; then, step by step, he illuminated the mystery of redemptive suffering as their hearts became capable of embracing it. He respected their freedom, awaited their invitation to stay with them, and finally led them to the recognition of his identity in the mysterious presence of his breaking bread. In brief, he respected their limited horizon and the pain of their personal experience, broadened that horizon and supplemented their inadequate understanding, and gradually led them to a fuller appreciation of the mystery of God. In this

way he inspired them to return to Jerusalem, to the church, where they could share and make their story part of the greater story, being confirmed in their faith through the experience of others.

The ultimate secret of successful spiritual direction, as of all things in all cultural settings, is the secret of love. Christian love, as St. Paul has reminded us, is "always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes" (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

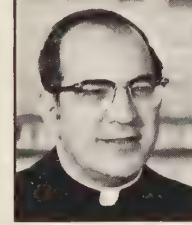
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# BOOK REVIEWS

*A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy* by A. W. Richard Sipe. New York, New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990. 336 pp. \$29.95.

**F**or the past few months the core findings of *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy*, a book that deals with celibacy and the sexual behavior of priests, have been featured in newspapers and on evening news broadcasts throughout the country. The book's author, A. W. Richard Sipe, has appeared on a number of television talk shows.

*A Secret World* presents the data from a twenty-five-year study of celibacy and the sexual behavior of priests. The book is divided into three sections: (1) a history of celibacy in the Catholic church, the context of the study; (2) a lengthy anthology of the sexual aberrations of priests, covering heterosexuality, homosexuality, and various forms of deviant sexual behavior, such as pedophilia, voyeurism, and exhibitionism; and (3) the attainment of celibacy. *A Secret World* is not based on a survey methodology, nor is it a sociological study; rather, it takes an ethnological approach, with which Sipe became acquainted through the eminent anthropologist Margaret Mead.

In reading the book, it is very important to realize that the numbers and tables do not represent the results of any statistical procedure; instead, they are Sipe's percentage estimates of the number of priests in each category, based on data collected over the course of twenty-five years in the three study populations. Unfortunately, the media have reported these figures as actual verifiable statistics, whereas they are simply Sipe's personal impressions as a consequence of his having provided psychotherapy to approximately five hundred priests, having held meetings and discussions with an equal number of priests not in therapy, and having consulted with another five hundred people with "first-hand information on priests' behavior," such as "lovers, sexual partners, victims, or otherwise direct observers of it."

*A Secret World* attempts to be a scientific work but falls far short of the rigorous standards that

would qualify it as such. Many of the references and source materials are newspaper and magazine articles and the psychoanalytic literature of twenty-five years ago.

## CORE DATA

On the basis of his study, Sipe estimates that 50 percent of all the priests in the United States are involved in some kind of sexual activity: 28 percent in heterosexual activity, 10 percent in homosexual behavior, and the remainder in some variety of deviant sexual behavior.

Sipe, a laicized former Benedictine priest who taught for a few years in a major seminary, is married to a former nun who is a psychiatrist. He himself was in psychotherapy for two years, and he had a period of clinical training at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, and the Seton Psychiatric Institute. He is neither a psychiatrist nor a psychologist and gives no evidence of being trained in the research methodology of the social sciences. His psychological orientation is in the psychoanalytic tradition.

## NOT CONTEMPORARY

The study covers a span of twenty-five years. The bulk of the case material seems to come from the sixties and early seventies, the turbulent years in the church, but Sipe gives no indication as to the exact dates at which he collected these case histories. Even though he taught in a seminary part-time, he does not seem to be conversant with today's seminarian and contemporary seminary training. Rather, he appears to be dealing with the seminarian and seminary training of twenty or more years ago.

*A Secret World* presents numerous cases involving the sexual behavior of priests and an analysis of the psychodynamics underlying these cases, which could be valuable to spiritual directors, those engaged in formation, and counselors of priests because it examines the pitfalls priests can encounter in their pursuit of celibacy. The material from the interviews and group meetings with an equal number of priests not in therapy appears to be from approximately the same period of time. The psychiatrists the author cites as authorities were in their prime twenty or more years ago. Therefore, one can rightly question how applicable the material is to priests of the

present decade, especially those who received their training within the past ten years.

Sipe does not adequately describe the approximately five hundred people in the three groups. He gives no indication as to their ages, when they were interviewed, where they lived, their racial and ethnic backgrounds, their cultural biases, or their attitudes toward the issues of celibacy and sexuality, all of which could have a definite bearing on the ultimate results of the study. Sipe and many of his informants appear to be biased against mandatory celibacy and a good number of the church's positions in regard to sexual morality.

## METHODOLOGY LIMITED

Sipe employs an ethnological approach—a methodology used by cultural anthropologists in studying the behavior of primitive peoples. An ethnological study, usually restricted to a limited homogeneous group, describes the behavior of the people studied but offers nothing more than estimates as to how many in the group manifest the type of behavior being studied. For instance, if an anthropologist wanted to find out whether the members of a certain tribe of Indians in the Amazon Basin use a method of limiting births, he or she would study the behavior of one tribe during one particular period. When the anthropologist had finished the research and formulated conclusions, those conclusions would apply to the one tribe of Indians studied and would indicate that some of its members did or did not use means to curtail births. If they did, any calculations as to how many Indians in the whole tribe used such means would just be estimates, unless the anthropologist had interviewed a sufficient number of Indians who were representative of all the tribe. Certainly, he or she could not legitimately apply the findings to all the many tribes of Indians living in the Amazon Basin under radically different circumstances and environmental conditions.

The priests in the United States, who number approximately fifty thousand, are anything but a homogeneous group. They differ in many respects—for example, some belong to the diocesan clergy, some to an order or congregation with a vow of chastity; some work in a city, some in a rural setting; they come from diverse parts of the country and numerous ethnic and racial backgrounds and have various levels of education. These and other factors could have bearing on their practice of celibacy or their participation in sexual behavior.

## LEGITIMATE CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can be legitimately drawn from Sipe's study? It can be said that within the population of priests Sipe studied, some were practicing celibacy and others were not, and some were

engaged in a variety of sexual activities. Sipe gives estimates of how many priests in his sample were celibate and how many engaged in particular sexual behaviors, but these are simply estimates, not statistics. Sipe's estimates are not applicable to the general population of priests in the United States because his sample of priests is not representative of all American priests.

## REPEATABILITY DOUBTFUL

Repeatability, one of the characteristics of any sound scientific study, means that if the study were repeated, it would yield approximately the same data. If a spiritual director or pastoral counselor of priests were to conduct this study of celibacy and sexuality among priests, it is most likely that the percentage estimates of priests living celibate lives and those engaged in sexual behavior would differ significantly from Sipe's because of differences that would exist in the orientation of the interviews and discussions as well as in the populations used in the study.

## ATTAINMENT OF CELIBACY

At any one time, Sipe estimates, 2 percent of vowed celibate clergy can be said to have achieved celibacy fully; 6 percent to 8 percent "have consolidated the practice of celibacy to such a degree that it approaches the ideal," but not without missteps and fumbling; and 40 percent practice celibacy to some degree. Once again, it can be said that although these numbers may hold true for the restricted sample of Sipe's study, they cannot legitimately be applied to the general population of priests throughout the country.

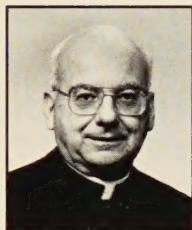
In the sample of priests used in the study, Sipe found that those who had achieved celibacy manifest the following characteristics: they are happy with their work situation and engage in avocations and hobbies; they have a regular and meaningful prayer life; they have a sense of themselves as part of a community; they serve in their ministry "on account of the Kingdom"; they lead balanced lives, integrating their practice of celibacy within the reality of their lives; and they have a sense of stability and rootedness in their relationships with other people, so that they can be themselves in these relationships. To these characteristics Sipe adds a sense of order, an appreciation for learning and the intellectual life, and (showing his monastic training and suggesting that a number of the participants in the study must have been Benedictines) an appreciation of beauty.

Sipe describes several stages the celibate goes through to achieve the fullness of celibacy, but as Sipe himself admits, these are based only on impressions, and much more research would be needed to verify them.

## EVALUATION

All in all, *A Secret World* reveals an extensive knowledge and understanding of celibacy and sexual behavior among the clergy in the three study populations. It contains some valuable information for those who are engaged in the training of priests, spiritual directors, and counselors of priests; reading the book will make them aware of the problems and deviations of priests in their pursuit of celibacy. It is indeed unfortunate that the study's methodology is so flawed and that the media have treated the data as factual statistics rather than what they are: the impressions and estimates of one person who has had extensive and intensive dealings with priests, particularly through his psychotherapy sessions with them.

—Richard P. Vaughan, S.J., Ph.D.



Father Richard P. Vaughan, S.J., Ph.D., is a psychologist in the practice of counseling and psychotherapy, mostly with priests and women religious. He was formerly provincial superior of the California Province of the Society of Jesus.

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*Reweaving Religious Life: Beyond the Liberal Model*, by Mary Jo Leddy. Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990. 181 pp. \$9.95.

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**R**eligious life in North America is disintegrating to the extent that it has internalized the patterns of decline in liberal capitalism. That disintegration, evident in every aspect of our lives, is symptomatic of the loss of a common and integrating vision. We are experiencing a crisis of meaning that will not easily be solved. . . . Our challenge is to learn how to be in this dark night in a way that opens the possibility for the future."

This provocative, perhaps shocking statement captures the essence of Mary Jo Leddy's reflections in *Reweaving Religious Life: Beyond the Liberal Model*. She states that "the book is an attempt to both criticize the predominant model of religious life in North America (since Vatican II) and to encourage the creation of a new, post-liberal model."

For Leddy, models—be they social, political, or religious—are patterned attempts to cope with reality and to reveal meaning. Convinced that each model has relative strengths and weakness, Leddy argues that the future of religious life will be only

as real as the commitment of religious communities to engage in a realistic assessment of the social and ecclesial situation within which religious life exists today. One need not agree with Leddy's assessments to be drawn into a dialogue with experience, which asks root questions about whether or not any model of religious life will continue to be a prophetic gift in the life of the church.

The distinctively feminine image of reweaving is effectively used to engage the reader in a sustained critical reflection on the present state of religious life (chapters 1 and 2) and the necessity of assuming a contemplative stance with regard to the demands of the moment (chapter 3), as well as to suggest some of the creative actions that seem to be called forth in response to the Spirit (chapters 4 and 5). Chapter titles such as "The Texture of the Times," "The Unraveling of Religious Life," and "The Threadbare Moment" hint at the depth and engaging nature of Leddy's reflections as she describes the kinds of activity and receptivity required for weaving an original pattern of religious life for the world and church of tomorrow.

Leddy begins her reflections by "examining religious life in the context of culture" and only then moves into a discussion of religious life within the context of the church. The point of departure is consciously chosen by the author for the potential it has to "reveal a different set of problems and possibilities for religious life." This approach reflects the author's conviction that "to admit there are problems with the liberal model of religious life is not to assume that this is the personal problem of those who are living this life. It does presume that this is a cultural problem and that the crisis in the liberal model of religious life reflects the wider and deeper problems of liberalism in the West."

Leddy's approach offers a fresh and revealing perspective on what may well be some of the issues most deeply affecting religious life in North America. Leddy acknowledges that her decision to begin her reflections on religious life in the context of her understanding of the decline of the Canadian and American cultures and political systems may be both disconcerting and disorienting to the reader. I am convinced that her decision brings a unique value to her work. This book offers an important and distinctive contribution to the growing body of literature on refounding religious life.

—Edward Coughlin, O.F.M., Ph.D.



Brother Edward Coughlin, O.F.M., Ph.D., is director of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University in New York City.

# Invitation to Authors

**T**

he principal intention of our Editorial Staff and Board in publishing HUMAN DEVELOPMENT is to be of help to people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This growth, which is as important for the well-being of society as it is for that of individuals, cannot be achieved apart from beneficial interaction between persons; nor can it be accomplished without the grace of the Creator who wants us all to live our lives as maturely as possible, and who is glorified by our doing so. The articles we publish are written to contribute to the promotion of such constructive interaction among persons, and between them and God.

The intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, physical, sexual, and cultural aspects of human development are all of deep concern to us. It is our hope that writers who desire to contribute to the ministry this journal represents will feel encouraged to deal with any of these areas of growth, keeping in mind the fact that our readers include church leaders, pastoral ministers, educators, religious superiors, spiritual directors, athletic coaches, religious formation personnel, campus ministers, missionaries, people performing healing ministries, parents, women and men engaged in lay ministry, and other people of various religious denominations who have in their care persons of all ages whom they want to help develop to the fullest degree of maturity, happiness, and human effectiveness.

We want the articles we publish to be of interest to as many of these readers as possible. We want the content of the articles to shed theoretical light on the various aspects of human development; we also desire to provide as many how-to articles as we can, in which the authors describe for our readers what they have learned from both their successful and their unsuccessful attempts to nourish the growth of others. We are especially interested in presenting articles that discuss the ways that development-related issues and problems are handled and ministries are performed in diverse cultural settings around the world. We want to receive reviews of books and films; reports on research, workshops, symposia, and courses; interviews; and letters to our editor.

In brief, we publish HUMAN DEVELOPMENT so that people wishing to become fully alive and to help others do the same can benefit from the knowledge and experience of writers at home in the fields of psychology, medicine, psychiatry, sociology, spirituality, organizational development, etc., who realize the importance of sharing their expertise with appreciative readers in 140 different countries, and who are generous enough to take the time to put their ideas on paper so that human beings can become what we are created to be: persons being made whole in the image and likeness of God.

Linda D. Amadeo, R.N., M.S.  
Executive Editor

# Human Development: A Worldwide Effort

During the past several years, staff members of the Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development have provided workshops, courses, and programs, along with professional consultations, throughout the world. These presentations have been offered for religious leaders, spiritual directors, formation personnel, pastoral counselors, clergy, religious, and laity. Our staff welcomes invitations to travel, especially to Third World areas, as well as to other regions where topics and issues of the type featured in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT can be profitably discussed. Some of the locations where we have already conducted programs are indicated on this map of the world.

